THREE-MINUTE PLAYS

INNOCENTIA
MUSICALIA
IMMORALIA

BY

PERCIVAL WILDE

1

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PERCIVAL WILDE

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INTRODUCTION

Before me lay a newspaper critic's review of a ecent opening:

"The effect would have been better," he com- ıented, "if the actors had known their lines."

A heaven-sent idea flashed upon me: why not rite plays in which there are so few lines that nly an exceptionally talented actor could succeed ı forgetting them?

The orthodox drama, long or short, calls for weeks f rehearsals. Why not turn out something so ex- essively brief that it could be rehearsed in but a ttle more time than that required for the actual erformance?

To memorize a part is difficult. Why not create arts so much to the point that they memorized ıemselves?

And then, scenery! Why build scenery when a few ords spoken by a master of ceremonies could de- ribe an imaginary setting better than the best tage designer could execute it?

"Je prends mon bien ou je le trouve." Well—some- mes. Of the twenty-odd miniature plays that follow, ıe great majority are wholly original with me, in- uding the three or four that have been handed

down by word of mouth, have been reprinted as their own by numerous unsuspecting writers, have appeared in the monthlies, the weeklies, and the dailies over a variety of signatures, and have become so well known that my connection with them has been all but forgotten.

As for the remainder? Anecdotes that have lent themselves to the dramatic form; episodes in and out of real life that contained the germs of plays; situations that may or may not have occurred, but that suited my purpose: I found them wandering about, orphans, unsheltered, in rags. I took them in, harbored them, mended their broken limbs, gave them new clothes, fed them, fattened them, fathered them. They are mine by right of discovery and adoption. Who shall say me nay?

"Above all things," said my publisher, "don't shock the Old Lady from Dubuque." Heaven (and the censor) forbid that word inscribed by pen of mine should summon the blush of outraged modesty to the sallow cheek of virtuous old age! Let not mine be the hand to rive the curtain that Mrs. Grundy has drawn between herself—and her past!

It has seemed moral, therefore, to divide the book into three sections.

In the first of these I have gathered the innocent plays. They are warranted 99.45% pure. They may deal with crime—but only with the crimes that sexless persons might commit. They may touch upon murder—but only upon murder as practiced by

dies and gentlemen of unblemished virtue. The vilest minals may read them with the assurance that thing in them can possibly corrupt them. If their roines dive into the mire, they shall emerge unfiled, purer than ever, and with better complexions. promise it. They shall be typically American.

So that this section may be distinguished at a ance from the others, even by the illiterate, who ght conceivably be harmed by injudicious read-g, the publisher has complied with my request, d has deckled the edges in baby blue.[1]

It was my first thought to place in a second sec-n the plays that were neither innocent nor the erse, but I ran into difficulties. There is no middle ound. Either a work is proper or it is improper: ut Caesar aut nullus!" One phrase, one word, n one misplaced comma, and purity ceases to be maculate. So finely drawn, in these precise days, our conceptions of goodness, that there is no Man's Land between the loftiest virtue and the est vice.

Here, again, inspiration came to my aid. It was ron who wrote that "music arose with its -pt—s swell," and it occurred to me that music, l nothing else in the world, is neither moral nor noral. Perhaps it is a little of each, and yet not much of either. A composition whose passionate peal might rouse me to a fervor of admiration, ght rouse a more Puritanical soul than mine to

[1] He didn't.

vague mutterings of prohibitions, inhibitions, and proscriptions.

I recall the sub-deb whom I escorted to a performance of "Tristan" years ago, and who actually became embarrassed during the last act.

"What is the matter?" I inquired.

She flushed. She cast down her eyes. "I have never heard such indecent music in my life!" she declared.

I expressed my astonishment.

She nodded. "If I only dared put into words what that awful oboe is saying——"

"Try it."

"How can you make such a suggestion?" Then her eyes met mine, and a light of sudden comprehension blazed in them. "You understand it just as well as I do!"

I did not deny it.

She thrust out her chin crushingly. "And I thought you were a gentleman!"

That is why I speak of music as I do.

So that this section may be distinguishable to the most casual of my readers, the publisher has helpfully refrained from deckling it at all, leaving its edges a camouflage white.[2] It is a brief section, as it should be: 'tis a short step from innocence to sophistication. I expect commentators as yet unborn to dwell upon the sublimity of this bit of symbolism.

It is to my third section that I have relegated

[2] He did.

e works which my biographers will one day class "Curiosa" and "Facetiae." They have been ouped together, where their virus cannot possibly rcolate through the volume, and where only the ung and vicious will read them. Even they need t do so unless their depraved tastes are beyond ntrol.

The publisher, mindful of his responsibilities, has ckled the edges of these passionate pages in flam- g scarlet.[3] If this does not flag sensitive readers, do not know what will.

As a matter of fact, I expect this section to be tally neglected by the majority of the million or ore persons who will purchase this book. It is a ction of realism, of unromance, of disillusion: at gates Santa Claus lies dead, and the stork is terred beneath its threshold. Thus it begins; what llows, follows.

It is cheerful, therefore wicked. It is wicked, there- re cheerful. It points no moral. It does not preach. does not even pretend to elevate. Such lofty aims abandons to the reformers. Its purpose is lowlier: is dedicated to the joy of living, to its drama, and its humor.

[3] See note 1.

ildeacre,
aron, Connecticut.

INNOCENTIA

ROBERT BURNS

ARACTERS:
The Widow
The Assistant
NE:
The Office of an Insurance Company.
E MASTER OF CEREMONIES (*as the curtain rises*)
You are to imagine, if you please, that this is the ffice of an insurance company. Eighty or a hunred desks are scattered about the floor. Eighty r a hundred young men are scattered about the esks. The room is simply but tastefully decorated ith eighty or a hundred stenographers, who are cattered about the young men. In this corner—ere—sits an oldish young man, who is a very imortant person. You know that because he has a rivate cuspidor, which nobody else is allowed to se. He is, in fact, Assistant to the Assistant to he Assistant Assistant.

There enters Mrs. Mary Ann Whiffenpoffer, idow of the late Robert Emmet Whiffenpoffer.

The Master of Ceremonies wipes his eyes.

This is a very tragic little play. I hope you will xcuse me.

He retires.

[*The Widow advances. She is a powerful, domineering female in deep black. The Assistant rises.*

THE ASSISTANT

Good morning, Mrs. Whiffenpoffer. (*Overcome by sorrow, she nods*) Won't you be seated?

THE WIDOW (*sitting*)

Thank you. It's so kind of you. Everybody's been so kind to me, Mr. —— Mr. ——

THE ASSISTANT

Higginbottom.

THE WIDOW

Mr. Higginbottom. It was so good of you to write that you'd see me.

THE ASSISTANT

Not at all; not at all! We're glad to see any of our policy holders at any time.

THE WIDOW

Yes—yes. (*She sobs. Then she controls herself*) Mr. Higginbottom, I've come about my poor dear husband's insurance—Robert Emmet Whiffenpoffer.

THE ASSISTANT

I have the papers here.

THE WIDOW

Forty thousand dollars.

THE ASSISTANT

Quite so.

THE WIDOW

When will I get it? You know he died a week ago.

THE ASSISTANT (*clearing his throat*)

Mrs. Whiffenpoffer——

HE WIDOW (*interrupting anxiously*)

The insurance company hasn't gone bankrupt?

HE ASSISTANT

No.

HE WIDOW

You're not going to tell me the premiums weren't paid! I have the receipts here.

HE ASSISTANT

The policy is perfectly in order.

HE WIDOW

Well, then, Mr. Higginbottom? Don't keep me in suspense! I'm a poor woman, and I need the money.

HE ASSISTANT

Madam, the late Robert Emmet Whiffenpoffer carried no *life* insurance with us.

HE WIDOW

Here's the policy!

HE ASSISTANT

Madam, look at it yourself. This is *fire* insurance —*fire* insurance for forty thousand dollars.

HE WIDOW (*breaking into sobs*)

Yes! Yes! That's why—that's why—I had poor dear Robert cremated.

CURTAIN

EVER UPWARDS!

HARACTERS:

Mrs. Upwards

A Friend

A Boy

HE SCENE:

A Street.

IE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

With this play, I take pleasure in presenting to you a great moral lesson. You will appreciate it: since the advent of the millennium, morals have become somewhat scarce in this country, and, really, before you can begin to improve morals, it's necessary to find some.

The cry used to be that one half never knew how the other half lived. We have evolved from that stage: today nine tenths live as one tenth legislate.

[*He bows.*

The reformers.

[*He retires.*

[*There enter Mrs. Upwards and a Friend. Mrs. Upwards is forty, lean, and quite nearsighted. The Friend, one of her numerous admirers, carries her brief-case.*

THE FRIEND

Did dear Judge Upwards send him to jail, Mrs. Upwards?

MRS. UPWARDS

He did—*and* he fined him. *I* saw to that! It was no less than the man deserved: the drunken sot! [*A Boy, running in from the other side, nearly caroms into the ladies.*

MRS. UPWARDS

Stop! Come here! (*She turns to her Friend.*) Dirty, isn't he? Unkempt? Wretched child! Ugh! (*She turns to the Boy.*) Boy, do you sleep in the streets, or have you a home? Eh?

THE BOY

Yes'm.

MRS. UPWARDS

Yes'm? What do you mean?

THE BOY

I mean, I have a home, ma'am.

MRS. UPWARDS

One would never believe it to look at you! . . . Are your parents alive?

THE BOY

Yes'm.

MRS. UPWARDS

Your father—and your mother?

THE BOY

Yes'm.

MRS. UPWARDS

Does your father drink?

HE BOY
Well——

IRS. UPWARDS
Out with it!

HE BOY
Once in a while.

IRS. UPWARDS
I know what that means! Does your mother make any effort to bring you up properly?

HE BOY
No, m'm.

IRS. UPWARDS
Ha! He admits it! Doesn't she try to educate you as a good, Christian man?

HE BOY
No, m'm.

IRS. UPWARDS (*to her friend*)
A virgin field for our labors! Give me my bag. (*From it she produces two tickets*) Boy, here are two tickets for a lecture I'm giving this afternoon: "Parents and Children," that's what I'm going to speak about. Run home, and give these tickets to your mother . . . and tell her I expect to see her in the audience without fail! And if you can find your drunken father, bring him along, too!

HE BOY
Say, Ma, what's gettin' into you? Huh? Don't you know me? I'm Willie, your little boy!

CURTAIN

THE GREAT AMERICAN DRAMA

CHARACTERS:

The Heroine
The Hero
The Governor
A Police Lieutenant
The Keeper of a Chinese Dive
A Waiter
Villains, Assistant Villains, Second Assistant Villains, Detectives, Private Detectives, Policemen, Stretcher Bearers, and Corpses.

SCENES:

Act I: Office of the Governor, Albany, N. Y. Act II: Cabinet Particulier, on the Boston Post Road. Act III: An Opium Den, Shanghai, China. Act IV: Police Headquarters, New York, N. Y.

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

I have the honor, ladies and gentlemen, to present to you a choice specimen of the Great American Drama, a product of America more famous than chewing gum, canned beef, or yellow journalism. In 1900 we produced only 1½ long tons; by 1910, with better methods of manufacture, our output rose to 8 tons; in 1920 we passed the 40 ton mark,

and today, not only are we supplying every hamlet in this splendid country of ours, but our surplus is so large that we are shipping it to Europe, Asia, and Africa, so that no part of the world may be untouched by its blight—I mean, light.

Our Motto is Uniformity, Purity, Reliability.

Uniformity: our manufacture is standardized; our acts are interchangeable with each other. They are made accurately to dimensions that have been tested and found correct. We do not make yearly models. When improvements develop, we incorporate them into our one, superior model.

Purity: our product is untouched by human hands. It is machine made from the raw materials, which is the rawest that we can obtain, and it goes straight from the factory to the consumer.

Reliability: we give you what you want and what you expect. We give you what you have always liked, and what you will therefore always continue to like. We shall not disappoint you. Satisfaction to our customers: that is our aim.

Our Slogan: Drama—from Contented Cows—I mean, Playwrights.

[*He claps his hands. The outer curtain rises, disclosing the Heroine, on her knees, weeping bitterly before a drop curtain. There are about a dozen other persons on the stage, and they are quite motionless.*

This is how we begin. It is the Office of the Governor.

THE GOVERNOR (*a man wearing a full beard*)
You did it!

THE HEROINE
I didn't!

THE GOVERNOR
You did it!

THE HEROINE
I didn't!

THE GOVERNOR
You did it!

THE HEROINE
I didn't!

THE GOVERNOR
Grrrh!

[*The Heroine weeps.*

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES
The heroine is accused. She is unjustly accused. It doesn't matter of what she is accused: she is accused, that is the one necessary thing. (*He indicates the lookers-on*) They're all against her. She is a woman alone. This is a very popular situation: so popular that the public will accept no substitute for it.

THE GOVERNOR
Take her to jail!

THE HERO (*bounding in*)
Stop!

THE HEROINE
Ah, Gregory!

[*She throws her arms about his neck.*

THE HERO

My own!

THE HEROINE

I am innocent! I swear I am innocent!

THE HERO

I know it!

THE HEROINE

You know it?

THE HERO

I am sure of it. As I walked down Broadway this afternoon, I saw your name in the electric lights in front of this theatre. You are the star of this play, I believe?

THE HEROINE

It says so in the contract.

THE HERO

That settles it. You must be innocent.

THE HEROINE (*overcome with emotion*)

Ah, Gregory!

THE GOVERNOR (*clapping his hand on her shoulder*)

To jail with you!

THE HEROINE

Must I go?

THE HERO

You'd better. This is just the first act. Tootle-oo.

[*He waves his hand and saunters off. She weeps.*

CURTAIN

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

The second act is laid in a private dining room in a roadhouse of bad reputation. The time is either a year later or a year earlier. It doesn't matter which. (*He claps his hands. The curtain rises, disclosing the heroine dining with a man*) The heroine is dining with the villain in this perfectly awful place. Of course she doesn't know it's awful. She never does. Nor does she suspect that he is trying to compromise her, but that's what he's doing. That's his business: compromising. American audiences love it.

THE WAITER (*a bewhiskered individual, opening the door stealthily*)

Hist!

THE VILLAIN (*crossing to him*)

Well?

THE WAITER (*hissing*)

Iss it zat everysing iss as he should be?

THE VILLAIN

Yess.

[*He gives him money.*

THE WAITER

Bien, m'sieur.

[*Exit.*

THE VILLAIN (*returning to the table, and with affected ease*)

More fish?

THE HEROINE

Just a soupçon.

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

You notice the trusting innocence of her reply? She doesn't suspect. She thinks they're alone. She doesn't realize that fourteen detectives are hidden in this room. I can see fourteen detectives in this picture. Can You? Look closely, and you will see one disguised as a footstool. There is another, made up to look like an electric fan. There is another, disguised as Wells' "Outline of History." The first detective is watching the villain, the second is watching the first, the third is watching the second, and the others are just local color.

THE VILLAIN

More fish?

THE HEROINE

A soupçon, only.

THE VILLAIN

I insist!

THE HEROINE

Only a soupçon!

THE VILLAIN

Mary! (*He seizes her in his arms*) Kiss me!

THE HEROINE

Never! Never!

[*They struggle.*

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES (*with excitement*)

Now you're going to see the great battle with Maxim silencers. This advertisement is paid for by the Maxim Silencer Company.

FIRST DETECTIVE

Ah!

[*Shoots villain. The guns make no sound.*

SECOND DETECTIVE

Ah!

[*Shoots first detective, whose body falls over the villain's.*

THIRD DETECTIVE

Ah!

[*Shoots second detective.*

FOURTH, FIFTH, . . . TO FOURTEENTH DETECTIVE (*in order*)

Ah!

[*Each shoots his predecessor. The bodies form several piles.*

THE HEROINE (*to Fourteenth Detective, horrified*)

You're the only one left?

FOURTEENTH DETECTIVE

Say not so!

[*He shoots himself.*

THE WAITER (*rushing in*)

Ah, mademoiselle, iss it zat you are 'urt?

THE HEROINE

I am not hurt.

THE WAITER

Bien! Très bien! Now go! Go queeck!

THE HEROINE (*frantically*)

Where shall I go?

THE WAITER

Osserw'ere.

THE HEROINE

Why? Oh, why?

THE WAITER

Because here are only ze second act, an' zere is many more trouble for you before ze play feenish.

THE HEROINE (*weeping*)

Ah, cruel! Cruel!

THE WAITER (*with dignity*)

Leaf me—wis ze dead.

THE HEROINE (*weeping bitterly*)

Yes. Yes.

[*She opens her purse, takes out a dime, and tips the waiter.*

THE WAITER

Mademoiselle, I sank you.

[*She reels out.*

CURTAIN

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

You have been wondering, doubtless, what has happened to our Hero. You will see in the next act. (*He claps his hands. The curtain, in front of a drop, rises to a height of three feet only*) We are in the lowest dive in Shanghai, China, Asia. The

dive is so low that we have set the scene in the basement. In no other way could we do it justice. (*A Chinaman crosses the stage, and descends a flight of stairs. For an instant his face, decorated with drooping mustaches, is visible*) The proprietor of the dive—an abandoned character. (*A pair of women's legs cross the stage, and go down the stairs*) Our heroine, descending into the den. Of all places in the world, she is here, in Shanghai—China—Asia. She is here, but she is pure as the driven snow. I don't know how that happens, but the public won't have it any other way. (*There is the sound of firing*) She's in trouble, as usual, and Maxim silencers have not been introduced in China. (*Running stretcher bearers cross the stage, with corpses between them. The Master of Ceremonies waves his hand lackadaisically.* Casualties. More casualties. Still more. And more.

THE HEROINE (*reels in at right, in front of the curtain. The Hero, with a smoking pistol, reels in at the left*)

Gregory!

THE HERO

Mary!

[*They embrace.*

A POLICEMAN (*clean-shaven, rushing in*)

Stop! In the name of the law, I arrest you!

THE HERO

What for?

THE POLICEMAN

I don't know, but I've traveled half way around the world to do it!

Tableau

CURTAIN

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

We are now ready for the inevitable explanation. Our last scene is Police Headquarters, New York City, the spot where so many thousands of good little plays have come to a happy end.

[*He claps his hands. The curtain rises, disclosing a Police Lieutenant at a desk, writing. As he is writing on sandpaper, his pen scratches fearfully. He presses a bell.*

A POLICEMAN (*entering and saluting*)

Yes, Lieutenant?

THE LIEUTENANT (*biting the tip off a cigar, and spitting it out*)

Bring her in.

THE POLICEMAN

Yes, sir.

[*He escorts the Heroine in.*

THE LIEUTENANT (*surveying the scene*)

That won't do at all. Take her out, and drag her in.

THE POLICEMAN

Yes, sir.

[*He takes the Heroine out, and drags her in, flinging her to the floor.*

THE LIEUTENANT (*lighting his cigar*)

That's much better. Now, bring in the man.

THE POLICEMAN

Yes, sir.

[*He opens a second door, and drags in the Hero. Then he dusts his hands.*

[*There is a long pause. The Lieutenant scratches away. The Heroine fidgets. The Hero fidgets.*

THE HEROINE

Commissioner!

THE LIEUTENANT

Uh?

THE HEROINE

I wish you'd stop scratching that pen.

THE LIEUTENANT

Why?

THE HEROINE

It makes me nervous.

THE LIEUTENANT (*scratching deliberately*)

It's intended—to do—that. It's—an ancient—Chinese—torture.

THE HERO

Stop!

THE HEROINE

Stop! Oh, stop! (*The Lieutenant stops for an instant*) You know, the only thing that makes me

more nervous than a scratching pen is the sound of a man filing his nails.

THE LIEUTENANT (*savagely*)

Yes? (*To the Policeman*) Bring me a nail file!

THE POLICEMAN (*protesting*)

Lieutenant!

THE LIEUTENANT

This is a direct order, Officer Dolittle!

THE POLICEMAN (*saluting*)

Yes, sir.

[*He goes out, to return an instant later with a tiny nail file.*

THE LIEUTENANT

We shall see what we shall see!

[*He files his nails. From off-stage comes the sound of a circular saw.*

THE HERO (*in agony*)

Ah!

THE HEROINE (*idem*)

Ah!

THE POLICEMAN

Stop! In Heaven's name, stop! I will tell all!

THE LIEUTENANT (*surprised*)

Officer Dolittle?

THE POLICEMAN

Look at me closely!

[*He claps on whiskers.*

THE HEROINE

The French waiter!

THE POLICEMAN

And now!

[*He puts on a drooping mustache.*

THE HERO

The proprietor of the lowest dive in China!

THE POLICEMAN

And now!

[*He dons a full beard.*

THE HEROINE

The Governor!

THE POLICEMAN

I am all of them. All of them! For thirty years, Lieutenant, for thirty years, I have been trying to atone!

THE LIEUTENANT

For what, Governor?

THE POLICEMAN

As Governor, I accused her unjustly. I repented. Ah, I repented bitterly! I followed her. I disguised myself as a waiter, and tried to protect her. I disguised myself as a Chinaman, and tried to protect her. And then, then, when she was far, far from the glorious land of the free, I disguised myself as a policeman, arrested them both, and brought them back to the good old U. S. A! (*He beats his breast*) Lieutenant, punish me, and let the kids go! Lieutenant, have a heart! Lieutenant, it's nearly ten-thirty, and by ten-thirty we've simply got to have a happy ending! Lieutenant, you will let them go,

won't you? (*With a scream of joy*) I knew it! You will! You will! (*He turns to the re-united pair*) Go, my children.

THE LIEUTENANT (*to the Policeman*)

But you, you go to the electric chair.

THE HERO (*indignantly*)

For what?

THE POLICEMAN (*with a beautiful smile*)

It doesn't matter. It's just that the public likes it.

THE LIEUTENANT (*clapping the Policeman on the shoulder*)

Come!

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays.

[*The Lieutenant and his prisoner take a step toward the door. The Hero and the Heroine take a step toward one another.*

Seats selling eight weeks in advance.

[*The Lieutenant and his prisoner take another mechanical step. The Hero and the Heroine embrace.*

Tickets bought from speculators will positively be refused at the door.

[*The Lieutenant and his prisoner take a third mechanical step. The Hero and the Heroine kiss.*

But try and buy them at the box-office!

CURTAIN

THE METICULOUS CUSTOMER

CHARACTERS:

The Customer
The Baker

SCENE:

A Bake Shop.

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES (*as the curtain rises*)

The scene is a bake-shop on a Monday. This is a Baker. (*He indicates the door, through which a young man now enters*) This is a Customer: a meticulous customer. If you don't know what "meticulous" means, just watch him, and you will learn.

THE CUSTOMER (*elegantly attired in a walking coat, silk hat, and spats, and carrying a cane and a monocle*)

My good man.

THE BAKER

Yes, sir?

THE CUSTOMER

Is this a bake shop?

THE BAKER

Yes, sir. It says so on the program.

THE CUSTOMER

Quite so. Quite so. That's why I came in here. (*He*

gazes at the shelves, and his glance returns to the Baker) I wonder—I wonder—if you could make me something very special.

THE BAKER

With great pleasure, sir.

THE CUSTOMER

I want a little bun—about so long, and about so wide, and about so high—and I'd like it to be decorated with the letter "S" in white icing.

THE BAKER (*writing down the order*)

The letter "S." That will cost——

THE CUSTOMER (*interrupting, and handing him a banknote*)

It doesn't matter what it costs.

THE BAKER

Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. The bun will be ready tomorrow.

THE CUSTOMER

Good day.

THE BAKER

Good day, sir.

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

A day elapses. It is now Tuesday.

THE CUSTOMER (*re-entering*)

Ah, good afternoon.

THE BAKER

Good afternoon, sir.

THE METICULOUS CUSTOMER

THE CUSTOMER

I gave you an order yesterday——

THE BAKER

I remember! A bun with the letter "S."

THE CUSTOMER

Exactly. Is it ready?

THE BAKER (*producing a bun from the shelf behind him*)

Here it is, sir.

THE CUSTOMER

Ah! But that won't do at all!

THE BAKER

No, sir?

THE CUSTOMER

The length is right, and the width is right, and the height is right; but the initial "S" is all wrong. You see, I wanted something plain, and chaste, and severe: just a block letter. You've gone to work and given me something much too rococo—oh, much! I believe you call this fancy script?

THE BAKER

Yes, sir.

THE CUSTOMER

Well, it's not what I want.

THE BAKER (*taking back the bun*)

I shall have another bun ready at this time to-morrow. (*Writing*) Block letter "S."

THE CUSTOMER

Yes; block letter. Good day.

THE BAKER
Good day, sir.

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES
Another day elapses. It is now Wednesday.

THE CUSTOMER (*re-entering*)
Ah, good afternoon.

THE BAKER
Good afternoon, sir.

THE CUSTOMER
I gave you an order yesterday——

THE BAKER
I remember! A bun with the letter "S."

THE CUSTOMER
Exactly.

THE BAKER
The block letter "S."

THE CUSTOMER
Quite so. Is it ready?

THE BAKER (*producing the bun*)
Here it is, sir.

THE CUSTOMER
Ah!

THE BAKER
Is the length correct? (*The Customer nods*) And the width? And the height? And the block letter "S"?

THE CUSTOMER
Perfect! Plain, chaste, severe: just what I wanted!

THE BAKER (*taking the bun, and beginning to wrap it up*)

Thank you, sir. Thank you. We aim to please. And now, sir, where shall I send it?

THE CUSTOMER

Send it? Send it? Send it? Why, don't send it anywhere. I'm going to eat it right here.

[*He does.*

CURTAIN

YASHMAK!

CHARACTERS:

He
She
It

SCENE:

A park bench.

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES (*as the curtain rises*)

We are in a park—any park you wish. Here are trees—here, and here, and here. Here is a bench. The object at one end of the bench is either a butler or an elevator operator when on duty. You can tell that by his rotundity and his contented manner. As you observe, he is now giving his whole attention to a cross-word puzzle.

[*He pauses.*

There enter two young people. I leave them with you.

[*He bows and retires.*

[*She precedes him by a step. She is angry. He is subdued and apologetic.*

[*She sits at the unoccupied end of the bench. He sits timidly in the middle. It looks up for an instant; then continues with the puzzle.*

HE (*clearing his throat after a pause*)
Lovey.

SHE
I told you not to speak to me.

HE
Yes, sweetheart.

SHE
I was never so mortified in my life! (*She glares at him. He tries to be invisible*) I was never so humiliated! (*She glares again*) I was never so ashamed of myself—and of you!

HE
Dearest!

SHE
Not a word!
[*He subsides.*

IT
I beg your pardon, sir——

HE
Eh?

IT
If it isn't taking too great a liberty, sir, could you tell me a seven-letter word meaning (*he refers to the puzzle*) "a veal worn by Turkish women?"

HE
A what?

IT
A veal—v-e-i-l.

HE
I've got troubles of my own.

IT

Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

SHE

I could have dropped through the floor with embarrassment! We were sitting on the bus. You put your arms around me. You kissed me.

HE

Who has a better right to kiss you?

SHE

That isn't it, and you know it isn't! If you could only kiss through a Maxim silencer, everything would be all right. But you don't—Heaven knows you don't—and the man with the megaphone turned around and said, "Don't alarm yourselves, ladies and gentlemen, that's just a tire blowing out. Change to the next bus." Oo-ooh! I could have *died!* And we had to change buses!

HE

Sweetheart!

HE

Oo-oo-ooh!

[*She clenches her fists.*

T (*looking up helplessly*)

Ma'am! Maybe you'll know it: a seven-letter word: a veal worn by Turkish women?

HE

Loafer!

T

Loafer? (*He shakes his head*) It begins with "Y" and ends with "K."

SHE (*turning to her victim once more*)

On our honeymoon, of all times—oh, how frightful!

HE

You're not going to bring that up again?

SHE

And pray why not?

HE

It happened six weeks ago.

SHE

We might have been executed! Both of us! We might have been guillotined! We might have been burnt at the stake! Lord only knows what they do in that barbarous country! While that little Italian was talking—that funny little man—what's his name?——

HE

Vermicelli.

SHE (*correcting him*)

Mussolini. While Mussolini was talking, you chose *that* moment to kiss me!

HE

Well, what of it?

SHE

Mussolini cried out, "I'm shot; long live Fascismo!" (*He writhes*) They arrested us. They threw us into jail. They would *never* have let us go if I hadn't proved you were feeble-minded.

HE

Dear one!

SHE

I never know when I'm to be humiliated next! I live in perpetual terror of what may happen any moment! Oh, it isn't right! It isn't fair! It's cruel!

[*She weeps bitterly.*

HE (*much upset*)

Dearest! Precious! (*He puts his arms around her*) I can't bear it to see you unhappy! Pull yourself together! Buck up!

SHE (*sobbing*)

Brute!

HE

Sweetheart! Honey! Duckums! I'm going to give you a little one: just a little one!

[*He kisses her!*

T (*leaping to his feet*)

Thank you, sir!

HE

Eh?

T

That's just the word I wanted: "Yashmak!"

HE (*rising with blazing anger and turning on her husband*)

Never—never—so long as I live, come near me again!

[*She goes out.*

CURTAIN

THE PHIAL

CHARACTERS:

Mrs. Tilton
Dan Ellis
A Newcomer

THE SCENE:

The living room in the Tilton home.

[*We are in a simple interior with two doors and a window. On the scene are Ellis and Mrs. Tilton.*

ELLIS (*after a pause*)

He's nothing but a big brute.

MRS. TILTON (*helplessly*)

I'm married to him.

ELLIS

He doesn't deserve a girl like you. No other man would go out night after night and leave his wife alone.

MRS. TILTON

Bob has his patients to look out for. A country doctor's time isn't his own. Why, the other night he had to leave just as we were sitting down to supper, and he didn't get back until morning. He was so tired when he came in that he was almost asleep—and then that fool Harper boy chose that

minute to break his leg, and Bob had to rush out again. Poor Bob!

ELLIS

Poor Mary! (*He takes her hands*) You're only a kid, and you're pretty. Life owes you a good time, and I'm going to see you get it. (*He kisses her*) Bob doesn't kiss you often, does he?

MRS. TILTON (*almost weeping*)

No; no, Dan.

ELLIS

Well, I'm going to make up for that. We leave tonight. We catch the express in an hour. I've reserved a compartment, Mary, and I've wired ahead to have the camp ready. I've planned it all: tomorrow morning we'll be in Canada.

MRS. TILTON (*suddenly*)

What was that?

ELLIS

What?

MRS. TILTON

I thought I heard a step—back there, in Bob's office.

ELLIS (*smiling*)

He isn't there, and he isn't coming back for a long time! I sent him a fake message to get him out of the way, and he fell for it. (*He takes her in his arms again*) What do you say, sweetheart? Are you going to stay here—and grow old—or are you going to be my own little girl?

[*There is a sudden, loud explosion, from the office.*

ELLIS (*panic-stricken*)
My God! He didn't go! He overheard!
MRS. TILTON (*almost inarticulate*)
He—he always kept an old pistol in his desk.
ELLIS
Oh! Oh! Oh!
MRS. TILTON
Go—see what happened.
ELLIS
I can't!
MRS. TILTON
Perhaps he's still alive. Perhaps we can help him.
ELLIS (*with sudden determination*)
I—I think I'm going home.
MRS. TILTON
Wait!
[*Tottering, she makes her way into the office.*
ELLIS
Well? Well?
MRS. TILTON (*returning*)
There's nothing you can do, Dan. No; not a thing. . . . Go. (*He moves towards her, inarticulately*) Go!
[*He hesitates; turns; rushes out. She stands at the open door; watching. Presently a Newcomer enters.*
THE NEWCOMER (*in bad humor*)
I've been on a wild-goose chase. Somebody 'phoned me that old man Denton had had a fit—and I

found him changing a flat tire not a mile out of the village——

MRS. TILTON (*interrupting*)

Bob! (*She puts her arms about his neck*) Bob! While you were gone, I made a remarkable discovery. I discovered how very much I loved you, and how terribly I'd miss you if anything ever happened to you.

THE NEWCOMER (*softening*)

And what brought about that discovery?

MRS. TILTON

Nothing of any consequence. (*She takes him by the hand, and leads him to the door of the office*) It was just a phial of ether—that exploded.

CURTAIN

THE FIRST CLIENT

CHARACTERS:

The Lawyer
The Stenographer
The Client

SCENE:

His Office.

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES (*as the curtain rises*)

A young lawyer's office. (*He waves his hand*) Everything is new—so new that it hurts. The bookcases are new; the law library in them is new; the desk and the inkwell and the swivel chair and the wastebasket and the carpet are new.

Our hero—(*he indicates the young man who paces up and down the office*)—started in business for himself at nine o'clock this morning. It is now exactly one minute past nine. (*He bows and retires*)

THE LAWYER (*interrupts his promenade to strike a legal pose. Then he resumes his peregrinations. The telephone, piled in a corner, and wrapped in its wire, attracts his attention. He picks it up, unrolls the wire, and places the instrument in a strategic position on his desk. The end of the wire he tucks*

into a drawer. He finds a bell push in another corner. He places this, too, on his desk, and striking a pose, pushes the button)

THE STENOGRAPHER (*entering*)

Did you ring for me, sir?

THE LAWYER (*with surprise*)

The bell push isn't connected yet.

THE STENOGRAPHER

I know it. I was watching through the keyhole. Would you like to dictate a letter?

THE LAWYER

Would I like to? I'd love to! (*She seats herself eagerly, and flips open a notebook*) Yes, I'd love to dictate a letter to a client. I'd do it, but for one reason——

THE STENOGRAPHER

That you have no clients?

THE LAWYER

Exactly. (*Their eyes meet. They laugh*)

THE STENOGRAPHER

Maybe there'll be one soon. (*A bell rings*) What did I say?

THE LAWYER

It can't be! Why, it can't be! The sign on the door isn't dry yet!

THE STENOGRAPHER

Maybe he hasn't noticed! (*She rushes out. She is back in a moment*) It's a client!

THE LAWYER (*swallowing hard*)

What does he look like?

THE STENOGRAPHER

Middle-aged; respectable; prosperous——

THE LAWYER

A bank-president?

THE STENOGRAPHER

I shouldn't be surprised.

THE LAWYER

A capitalist?

THE STENOGRAPHER

Maybe.

THE LAWYER

Keep him waiting a few minutes, and then send him in. (*Correcting himself*) No: when you hear me strike a match, send him in.

THE STENOGRAPHER

Yes, sir.

[*She goes out.*

THE LAWYER (*yanks half a dozen books out of the cases, opens them, and strews them about. He places a box of cigars on the desk, and takes one himself. He takes up the telephone. Then he strikes a match*)

THE STENOGRAPHER

This way, sir.

[*She ushers in an important looking individual, who carries a small satchel, and effaces herself. The caller, at a gesture from the lawyer, sits down.*

THE LAWYER (*over the telephone*)

Yes; I expect him to compromise for a hundred

thousand. It's cheap at that . . . I'm glad you're pleased with me . . . Thank you; thank you. (*He steals a glance at the Client's face; it is impassive*) Sorry, but I'll be busy all day tomorrow: one conference after another. Make it Thursday? . . . At eleven o'clock? . . . I can give you from eleven to eleven-twenty. . . . All right. Good by. (*He hangs up, and pushes the cigars toward the Client*) A cigar?

THE CLIENT

Um.

[*He takes one.*

THE LAWYER

A light?

THE CLIENT

Um. (*He draws a few whiffs*) Good cigar.

THE LAWYER

Glad you like it. Now, what can I do for you?

THE CLIENT (*rises, and to the Lawyer's astonishment, removes his overcoat, his coat, and his vest. He places his valise on the desk, opens it, and produces a variety of tools. Then he smiles gently*) I'm from the telephone company. I was sent here to hook up your instrument.

CURTAIN

"'TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE . . ."

CHARACTERS:

The Father
The Mother
The Progeny, in assorted sizes from 10 to 0.

THE SCENE:

X marks the spot.

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

"'Twas the night before Christmas, when all
through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that ST. NICHOLAS soon would be
there. . . ."

You know the rest.

[*He claps his hands. The curtain rises.*

See?

[*He bows and retires.*

[*Before us is a living room, with only the Father lacking to complete the picture. The Mother, sitting at the Father's desk, is compiling an endless list of what she desires for Christmas. The older Progeny, scattered about the floor, are compiling lists. The younger Progeny are doing the same*

verbally. A dozen or more capacious stockings are hung up at the fireplace.

THE PROGENY

A sled!

A pair of skates!

A toy automobile!

A phonograph!

THE MOTHER (*blissfully*)

New hats!

THE PROGENY

Boxing gloves!

A 'lectric train!

A walking doll!

A bicycle!

THE MOTHER

A new fur coat!

THE PROGENY

A toy house!

A police dog!

Another radio!

A Boy Scout outfit!

THE MOTHER

A new limousine!

THE FATHER (*entering—a tragic figure*)

Oof! (*The conversation halts. They all rush to him*) What a day! What a day!

THE MOTHER

Dearest!

THE FATHER

Lord, I'm glad to be home again!

THE PROGENY

Daddy!
Father!
Papa!
Da-da!

THE FATHER (*sinking into a chair*)

What a day! What a day! It began when I went down in the elevator. The elevator boy reminded me that tomorrow was Christmas. The doorman touched his hat to me, and said "Merry Christmas, sir"—and then he interrupted himself, and said, "I beg your pardon, sir. It isn't till tomorrow, is it?" As if he hadn't known that all along!

My chauffeur was grinning when he opened the door of the car. He had spent half the night polishing it, and it shone. When I got out he wanted to know if I had ever seen the car looking nicer. He also wanted to know if I had put the men at the garage on my Christmas list.

There are six elevators in my office building. I jumped into the first one. It wasn't supposed to stop at my floor, but it did. When I went down to lunch, I rode in another elevator: it was waiting, and I couldn't escape it. When I came back, I rode in a third. I took a fourth to the barber's. I took a fifth back to the office. I rode in the sixth when I went home—and every operator wished me "Merry Christmas," grinned, and directed my attention to a neat little box he has fastened to the grating of his car.

THE MOTHER

Poor dear!

THE FATHER

I'm getting ahead of my story. When I reached the office, all the clerks were gathered at the door. They gave me a rousing welcome. My junior partner was waiting for me. He reminded me that he's going to get married soon. The manager brought me a list of raises—not omitting himself. There were eighteen begging letters: charities wanting Christmas donations.

I went out to lunch. The head waiter mentioned that he was paying off a mortgage. My waiter brought me two portions of everything, and put four lumps of sugar in my coffee. Even the bus boy was anxious; and the girl who checked my hat told me that she had taken a spot out of it while I was eating.

THE MOTHER

Tst! Tst!

THE FATHER

I stopped in at the barber's. The head barber himself showed me to a chair, and brought me a newspaper—today's newspaper, mind you!—not last week's. The regular barber shaved me with a brand-new razor, and didn't slice off a piece of my ear. The manicurist was most attentive. So was the bootblack. So was the boy who brushed me off.

I returned to my office. Two scrubwomen were

lingering in the hall to wish me "Merry Christmas." An income tax man was waiting for me. It appears I underpaid my tax, and they've assessed me a couple of thousand more—and a fine.

My landlord was waiting. When my lease runs out, he's going to jack me up.

THE MOTHER

Darling!

THE FATHER

I sent for the head book-keeper. I asked him how much money I'd made this year, and he said I hadn't made a cent. Do you hear that? Not a single, solitary sou-markee!

THE MOTHER

Sweetheart!

THE FATHER

I ran the gauntlet again, and I went home—and maybe I'm not glad to be here! Oh! Oh! Oh!

THE PROGENY

Daddy!

Father!

Papa!

Da-da!

THE FATHER (*happily*)

What is it, children?

THE PROGENY

I want a sled!

I want a pair of skates!

I want a toy automobile!

I want a phonograph!

THE MOTHER

I really need some new hats.

THE FATHER (*groaning*)

Oh!

THE PROGENY

I want boxing gloves!

I want a 'lectric train!

I want a walking doll!

I want a bicycle!

THE MOTHER

I don't see how I can get along without a new fur coat!

THE FATHER (*in agony*)

Oh! Oh!

THE PROGENY

I want a toy house!

I want a police dog!

I want another radio!

I want a Boy Scout outfit!

THE MOTHER

We positively must have a new limousine!

THE FATHER (*screaming*)

Oh! Oh! Oh!

[*He snatches a revolver out of the open drawer in his desk, and dashes into the next room.*

THE MOTHER (*beating on the door frantically*)

Daddy! Daddy!

THE PROGENY

Daddy!

Father!

Papa!

Da-da!

[*From the next room comes the report of a revolver shot. The Mother screams. The Progeny cry. The door re-opens, and on the threshold stands the Father, deathly pale, and with the smoking revolver in his hand.*

HE FATHER

Be brave! Oh, be brave!

HE MOTHER

What is it, Daddy? What is it?

HE FATHER

Be brave, my dear ones! Be brave!

[*He totters into the room, and collapses into a chair.*

HE MOTHER

In Heaven's name, Daddy, what is it?

HE FATHER (*raising an ashen face*)

Dear ones, dear ones, I have frightful news: Santa Claus has just committed suicide.

CURTAIN

THE STORK

CHARACTERS:

An Expectant Father
A Very Old Woman
An Obstetrician

SCENE:

The Next Room

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Our next play presents our author in his most felicitous manner. "The Stork": what thoughts leap to one's mind at its mere mention! Let me read you what the dictionary says about it: "A large, altricial, grallatorial bird, of the family *Ciconiidae*, and especially of the subfamily *Ciconiinae*." Isn't that beautiful? Isn't that suggestive? Isn't that inspiring to any true poet?

In this play some critics have discerned the influence of Maeterlinck's "The Blue Bird"—you all remember that play, don't you?—but other critics, equally acute, are inclined to believe that it owes much to Lewis Beach's "The Goose Hangs High." My personal opinion is that it is foreshadowed very clearly in "The Birds" of Aristophanes, but I shall leave you to draw your own conclusions. [*He claps his hands. The curtain rises.*

There is a fine, Ibsenesque simplicity here. We are in the room next to the room in which a new life is being ushered into the world. It is three in the morning, and these people whom you see here are waiting.

[*He points.*

This is A Very Old Woman. She must be at least a hundred years old, and she is very wise.

[*He points again.*

This determined looking person is the most appealing character in all literature: An Expectant Father. I have said enough.

[*He bows and retires.*

THE EXPECTANT FATHER (*grimly crashing his fist down upon the table at which he is sitting*)

And I repeat, "No!"

THE VERY OLD WOMAN (*rocking and knitting and speaking in a cackle*)

There speaks youth! Eh! Eh! Eh! Eh! I remember how your father uttered those identical words! Eh! Eh! Eh! Eh! I remember how your grandfather made a remark of similar meaning! Eh! Eh! Eh! Eh! I remember how your great-grandfather, placed in the same position——

THE EXPECTANT FATHER (*interrupting*)

Once and for all, I have made up my mind on the subject!

THE VERY OLD WOMAN

Eh! Eh! Eh! Eh! Your great-grandfather, and his father and his father before him felt very much as

you do. Eh! Eh! Eh! Eh! Men are always blind. It takes a woman's intuition——

THE EXPECTANT FATHER (*interrupting*)

For the tenth and last time, I do not believe in the stork!

THE VERY OLD WOMAN

Eh! Eh! Eh! Eh! (*She halts suddenly*) Did you hear something? Hush!

[*They are silent, listening intently for sounds from the room at the left. The trilling of a bird is heard.*

THE VERY OLD WOMAN (*triumphantly*)

Eh! Eh! Eh! Eh! The stork!

THE EXPECTANT FATHER

Molly's pet canary.

THE VERY OLD WOMAN

Only a very skeptical man would mistake a stork for a canary.

THE EXPECTANT FATHER

Damnation! Don't I know the canary's voice as well as I know Molly's?

[*The door at the left bursts open, and the Obstetrician enters in operating costume.*

THE OBSTETRICIAN

The salt! Quick!

[*He rushes out again with a bag of salt which he finds on the table.*

THE EXPECTANT FATHER (*with a challenging air*)

Salt has an antiphlogistic, astringent, antiseptic action.

THE VERY OLD WOMAN

Rubbish! Eh! Eh! Eh! Eh! He's going to put it on the stork's tail!

THE EXPECTANT FATHER

Stuff and nonsense!

THE OBSTETRICIAN (*bursting in again*)

Water!

[*He rushes out with a carafe.*

THE EXPECTANT FATHER

He's going to wash his hands.

THE VERY OLD WOMAN

He's caught the stork, and the bird is thirsty. Eh! Eh! Eh! Eh!

THE EXPECTANT FATHER

What rot! A stork can go for a week without a drink!

THE VERY OLD WOMAN

Eh! Eh! Eh! Eh! You're confusing storks and camels!

[*The door at the left bursts open, and a perfect hurricane of feathers is blown into the room.*

THE VERY OLD WOMAN

See! See! Do you believe—now?

THE EXPECTANT FATHER

Merciful Heavens! There's something in it after all!

[*He seizes a handful of the feathers and examines them. He utters a hoarse crow of recognition.*

These are goose-feathers! Molly's pillow has fallen into the electric fan!

[*The Obstetrician re-enters in triumph. Hanging from one hand, slung in the classical napkin, is a new-born infant. In the other hand is a scroll of paper.*

THE EXPECTANT FATHER (*rushing to him*)

What's this? What's this?

THE OBSTETRICIAN (*holding the infant behind his back and presenting the scroll*)

The bill!

THE VERY OLD WOMAN

The bill!

THE EXPECTANT FATHER

The bill! The bill! (*He falls to his knees, and raises his arms*) I believe! Oh, I believe!

[*A large cardboard stork, guided by a wire, flaps in at the left-hand door, flaps across the stage, and flaps out at the right.*

Tableau

CURTAIN

MUSICALIA

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

CHARACTERS:

An American
Another American
Tourists
A Waiter
The Proprietor
A Swiss Band

THE SCENE:

At a Swiss summer resort.

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES: (*as the curtain rises*) You are to imagine, if you please, that you are seated in the courtyard of a tiny Swiss hotel. A dozen marble-topped tables are scattered about. At them sit tourists, thoughtfully sipping their drinks. Here, in the foreground, is an American. As you see, he is alone. There are other Americans in this play, but they don't matter now. If you are observant, you will note the gentle melancholy that broods over the scene. That is because it is the Fourth of July, and at that time of year thirsty Americans are usually far, far from home. [*He bows and retires.*

A TOURIST

Kellner! Noch einmal!

THE WAITER

Jawohl, mein Herr.

THE LONELY AMERICAN

Gassong, fill 'er up again.

THE WAITER

Tout de suite, m'sieu.

THE PROPRIETOR (*appearing at the entrance*)

Mesdames—messieurs! Meine Damen und Herrn! Ladees—an' gen'lemen! In honneur of ze grreat American fiesta which is today, I have prepare a leetle surpris. Mais oui, messieurs! Quelque chose tout à fait épatant! Ausgezeichnet! Sonderbar! Magnifique! On grreat dispense, I have made send from Zurich ze musique of ze 'ymne nationale des grands États Unis d'Amerique.

[*There is vociferous applause from the tourists. The Proprietor bows happily, and continues.*

Zey had not but one partition: for ze violon seulement; but ze orchestre, he comes from to improvise un accompagnement vraiment très joli.

[*The applause and cheers are deafening.*

Ze orchestre.

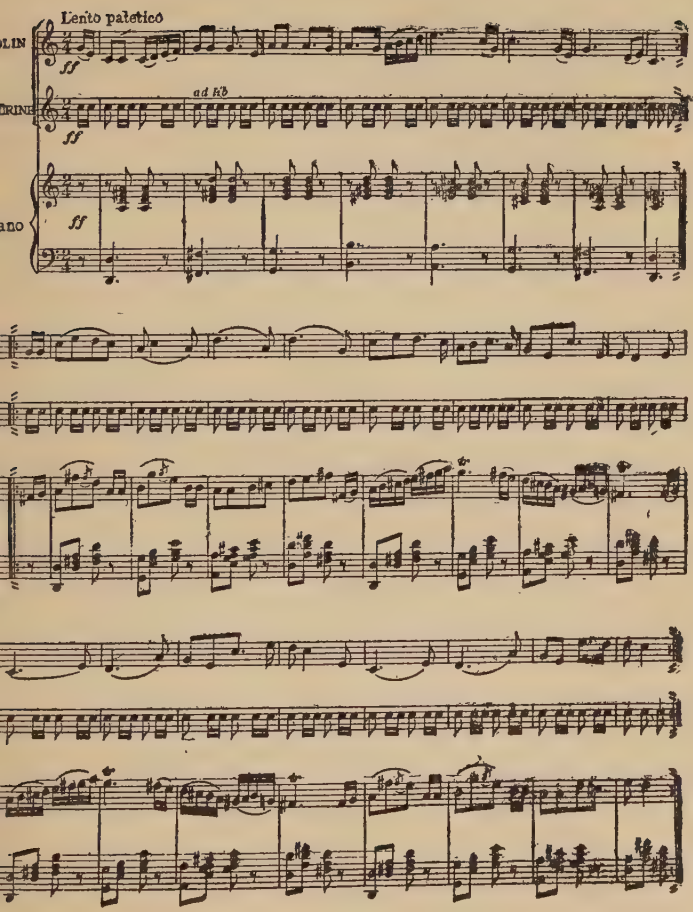
[*There enter a violinist, a tambourinist, and a pianist.*

He will now make to play ze 'ymne nationale d'Amerique, zat so beautiful melodie, "Trixie."

[*He bows, amidst great enthusiasm. The orchestra seats itself, and perpetrates the following:*

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

"TRIXIE"



[*During the execution of the foregoing, the Lonely American has been growing visibly sadder. Long before the chorus, he has dissolved into tears. Even before the end, he is a broken man. From one of the other tables rises a sympathetic soul, another American, and approaches him.*

THE OTHER AMERICAN (*speaking with a broad Southern accent, and stretching out his hand*)
My friend! My friend! I can see you're a Southerner.

THE LONELY AMERICAN (*raising a tear-stained face*)
A Southerner? Hell, no! I'm a musician!

CURTAIN

DUETTO

CHARACTERS:

A Violinist

A Pianist

SCENE:

A Concert Hall

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES (*stepping out upon the stage, which is bare except for a piano with exposed action*)

Ladies and gentlemen: I have great pleasure in introducing our next number: a musical one. I need not mention the name of the piece that is going to be performed. It is so well known, so very well known that you will recognize it when you hear the first few notes. A man may know nothing else about music, but he always remembers this piece. In fact, it is none other than the——

[*He pauses and smiles.*

It is none other than the——

[*He is audibly prompted from the wings.*

It is the celebrated "Berceuse," by Jocelyn.

[*He is signalled from the wings.*

Excuse me a minute.

[*He retreats to the wings, and returns.*

A little mistake on my part: it's not *by* Jocelyn. No, Jocelyn didn't write this, though he wrote a slew of other things. It's by a blighter named Goddard, and it's *from* Jocelyn. You see, Goddard must have heard Jocelyn playing this some evening, and he wrote it down, and took out a copyright on it before Jocelyn got hep. At any rate, that's how I explain it. But posterity has not withheld from Jocelyn the credit that was really his, and that's why it's *from* Jocelyn whenever you see it mentioned in a program.

[*He consults his notes.*

You are fortunate, because you will now hear this celebrated piece played by that great violinist—

[*He consults his notes.*

Professor—Professor—Professor— Well, I can't pronounce it, but you all know the beautiful poem: "A violinist by any other name would smell as sweet."

[*He bows, retires to the wings, and returns.*

A little correction: it's not going to be a violin solo after all. No. It's going to be a piano solo, with violin obbligato, and the piano will be played by that world famous artist—that world famous artist—the one whose name you will find in the northeast corner of the program, next to the grocer's advertisement.

[*He bows again, retires, and sallies forth once more.*

Another correction: I have been asked to say that

it won't be a violin solo, and it won't be a piano solo. On the contrary, it will be a duet by piano and violin. I have been asked to add that no matter how often you have heard this piece—"Berceuse," from Jocelyn—you will learn something new about it tonight. In fact, after tonight, you will never hear it elsewhere without remembering this eventful occasion.

[*He waves his hand.*

Ladies and gentlemen, the professors.

[*He withdraws.*

[*The Violinist and the Pianist enter, two hairy Russians in full dress. They advance to the center of the stage together, and they bow to the audience. During the process each of them attempts to center the attention of the audience upon himself, and each makes valiant, but unsuccessful efforts, to monopolize the center of the stage.*

[*The preliminaries being over, the Pianist pompously seats himself at the piano. The Violinist promptly places himself where he shuts off the audience's view of the Pianist, and begins to tune his instrument. The Pianist angrily motions the Violinist to one side, and the Violinist accedes—very temporarily. He tunes his violin at great length, while the Pianist does not conceal his irritation.*

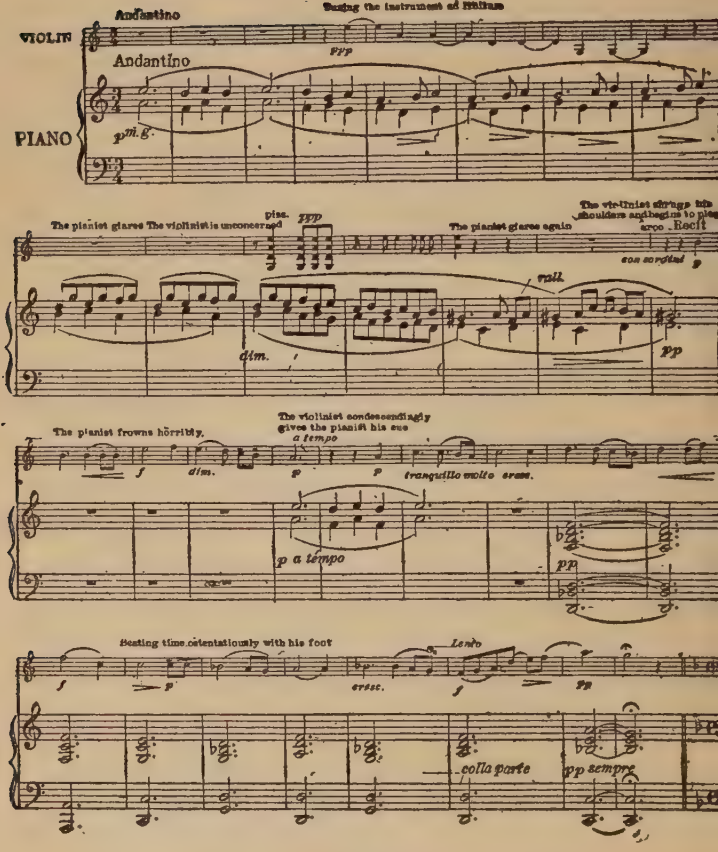
[*Finally he raises his bow, nods condescendingly, and the Pianist begins the prelude.*

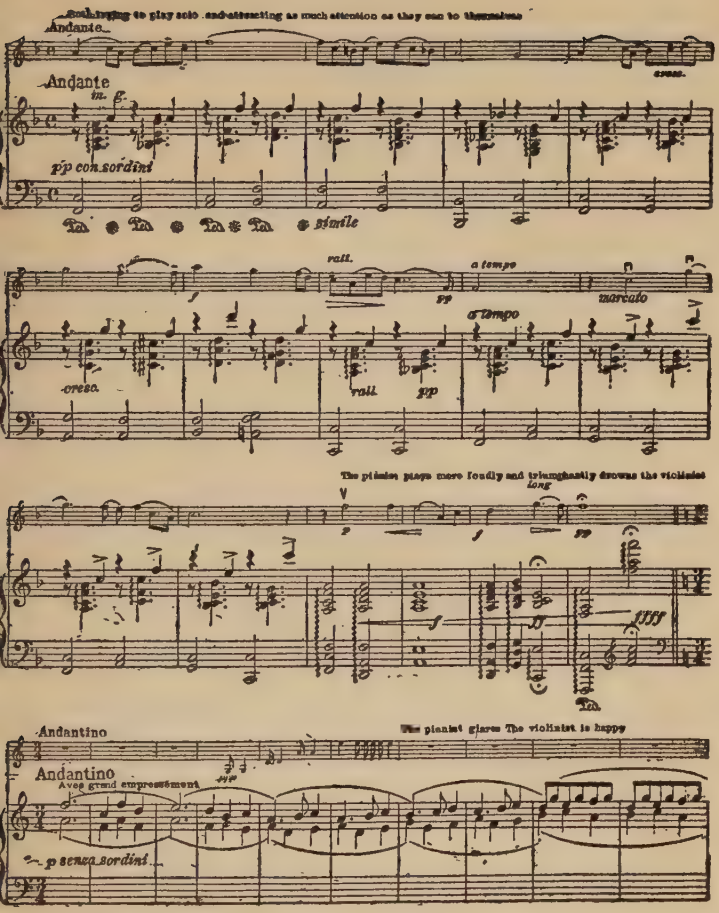
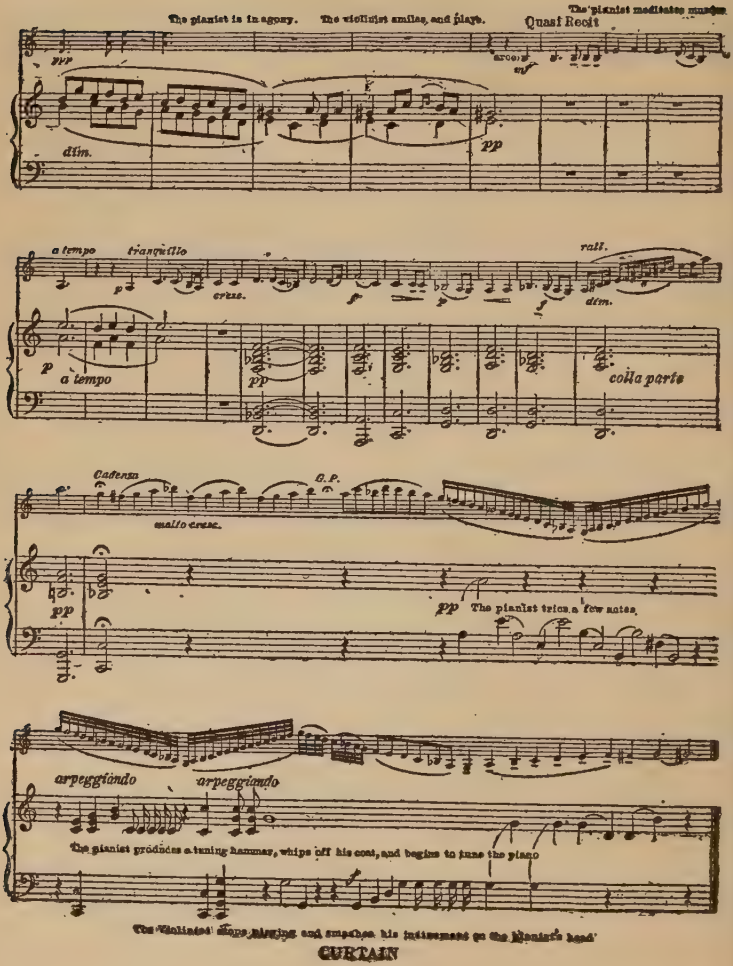
Berceuse

from

"Jocelyn"

(B. Godard.)



DUETTO

Both trying to play solo and attracting as much attention as they can to themselves
Andante
cresc.
Andante
in F
pp con sordini
simile
rall.
a tempo
pp
a tempo
marcato
cresc.
rall.
pp
The pianist plays more loudly and triumphantly drowns the violinist
long
ff
Andantino
The pianist glares The violinist is happy
Andantino
Avec grand empressement
pp
p senza sordini

The pianist is in agony.
The violinist smiles, and plays.
Quasi Recit
The pianist meditates suicide.
pp
arco
mf
dim.
pp
a tempo
tranquillo
rall.
cresc.
dim.
a tempo
pp
colla parte
Cadenza
G.P.
molto cresc.
pp
pp
The pianist tries a few notes.
arpeggiando
arpeggiando
The pianist produces a tuning hammer, whips off his coat, and begins to tune the piano
The violinist stops playing and smashes his instrument on the pianist's head.
CURTAIN

MOVIELESS MOVIES

by

EMIL BREITENFELD & BARON IRELAND.

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

The progress of the motion picture has been greatest along technical lines. Stories remain the same, but mechanical methods improve with every day. Technicolor, the Vitaphone, and other marvelous inventions quickly come to mind.

I now have the honor to announce the latest and greatest improvement in the silent drama: the entire elimination of the pictures. The motion picture of the future will use no screen at all. In short, I venture to present Movieless Movies.

[*He bows and retires. The curtain rises, disclosing a bare stage, on which is placed a piano. The speaker, if any, comes down center, the pianist takes his seat, and the lights are dimmed.*

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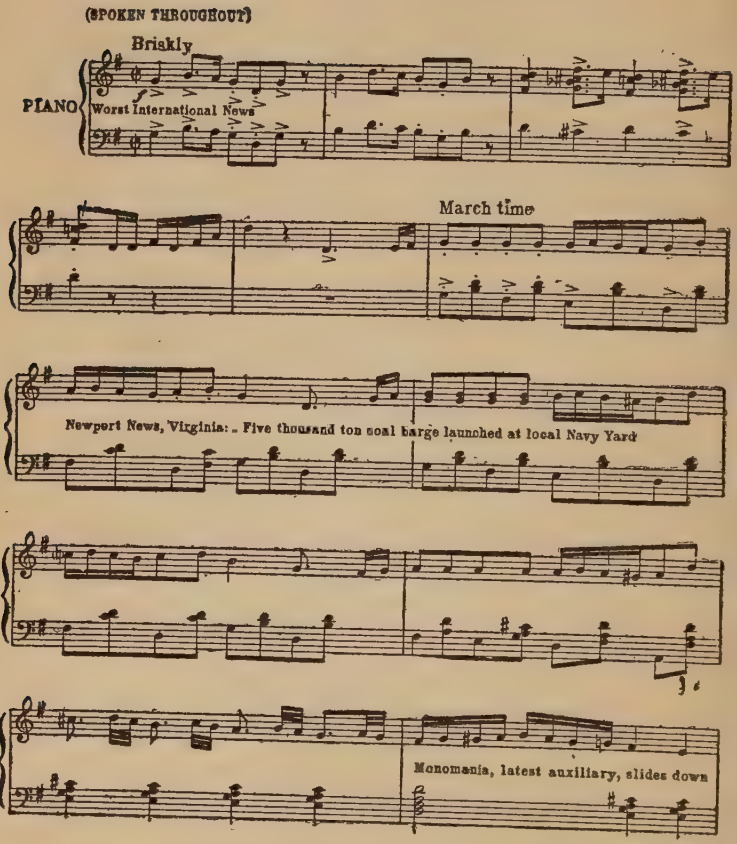
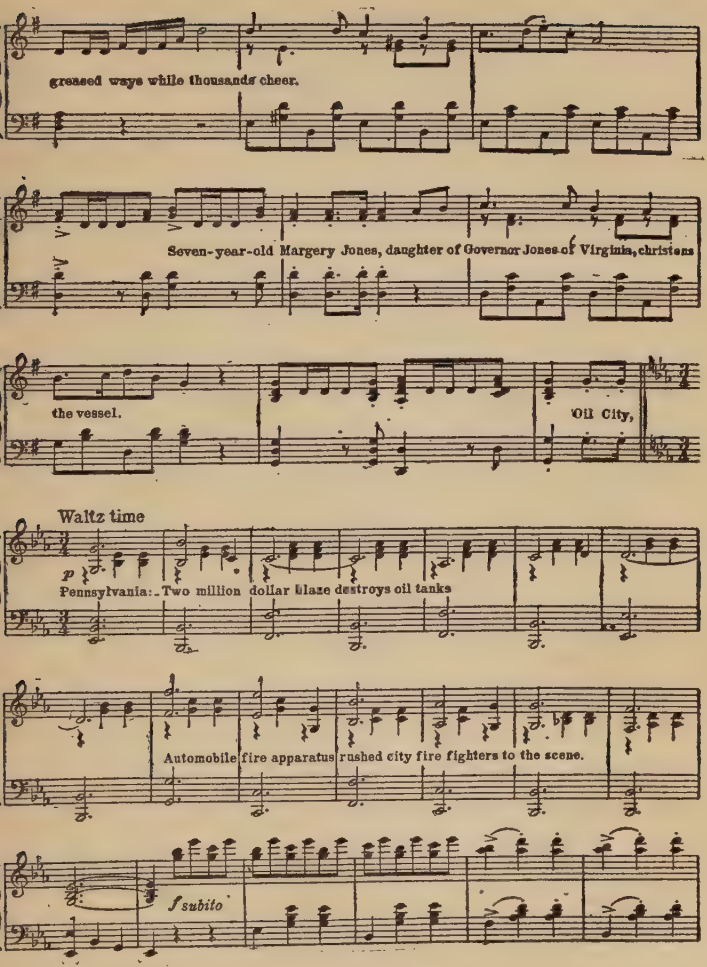
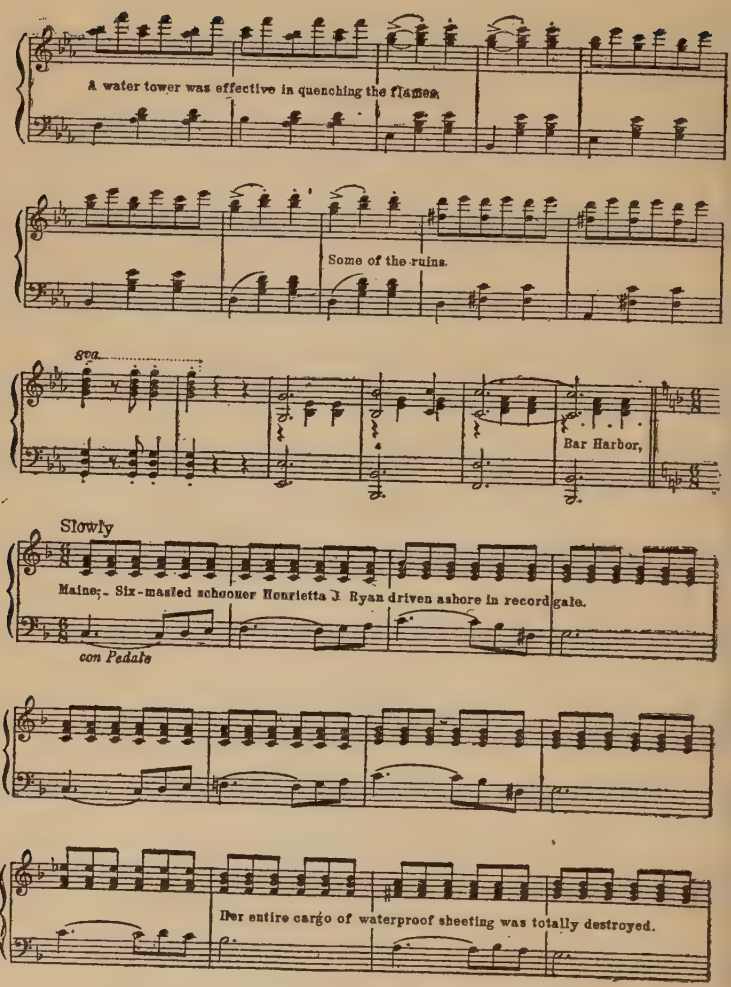
Movieless Movies

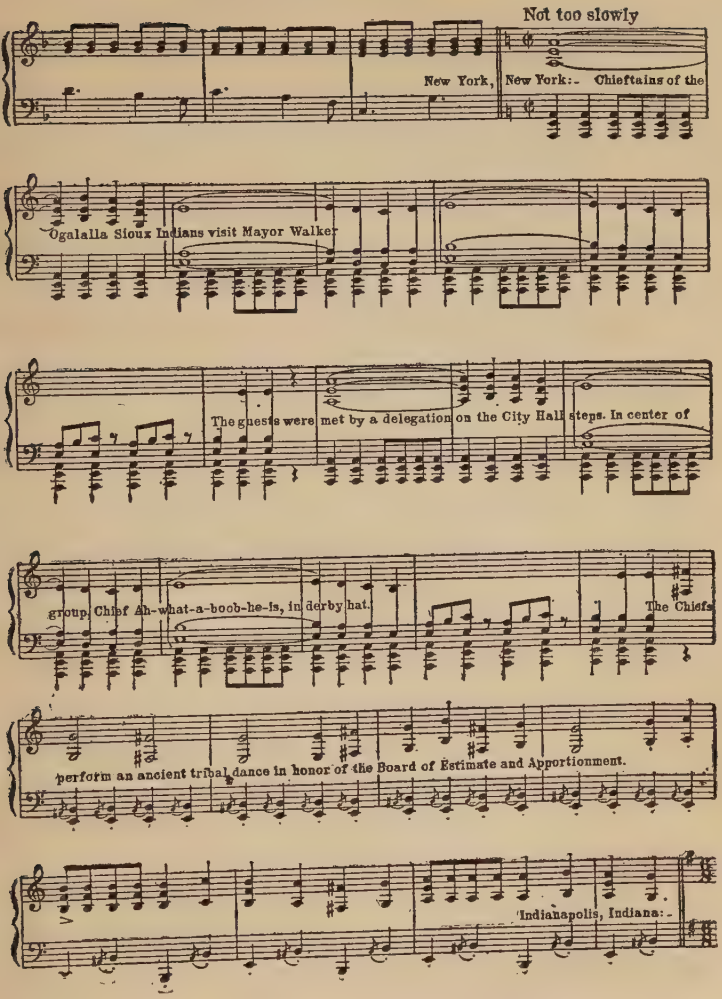

(SPOKEN THROUGHOUT)
Briskly
PIANO
Worst International News
March time
Newport News, Virginia: .. Five thousand ton coal barge launched at local Navy Yard
Monomania, latest auxiliary, slides down

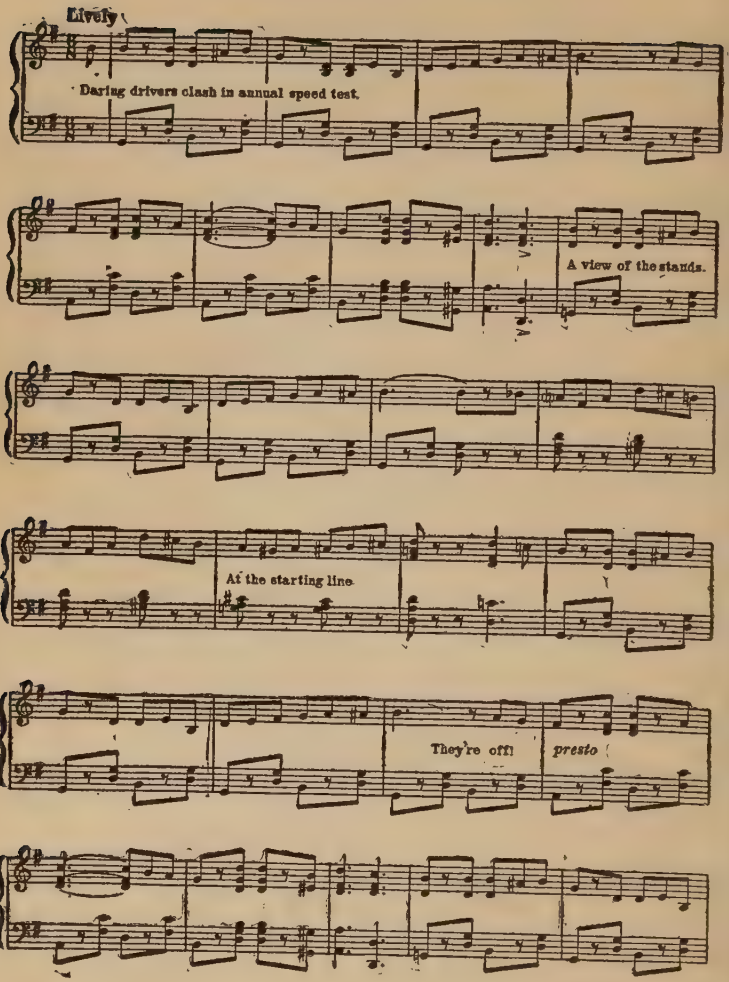
MOVIELESS MOVIES


greased ways while thousands cheer.
Seven-year-old Margery Jones, daughter of Governor Jones of Virginia, christens
the vessel.
Oil City,
Waltz time
p
Pennsylvania: Two million dollar blaze destroys oil tanks
Automobile fire apparatus rushed city fire fighters to the scene.
f subito

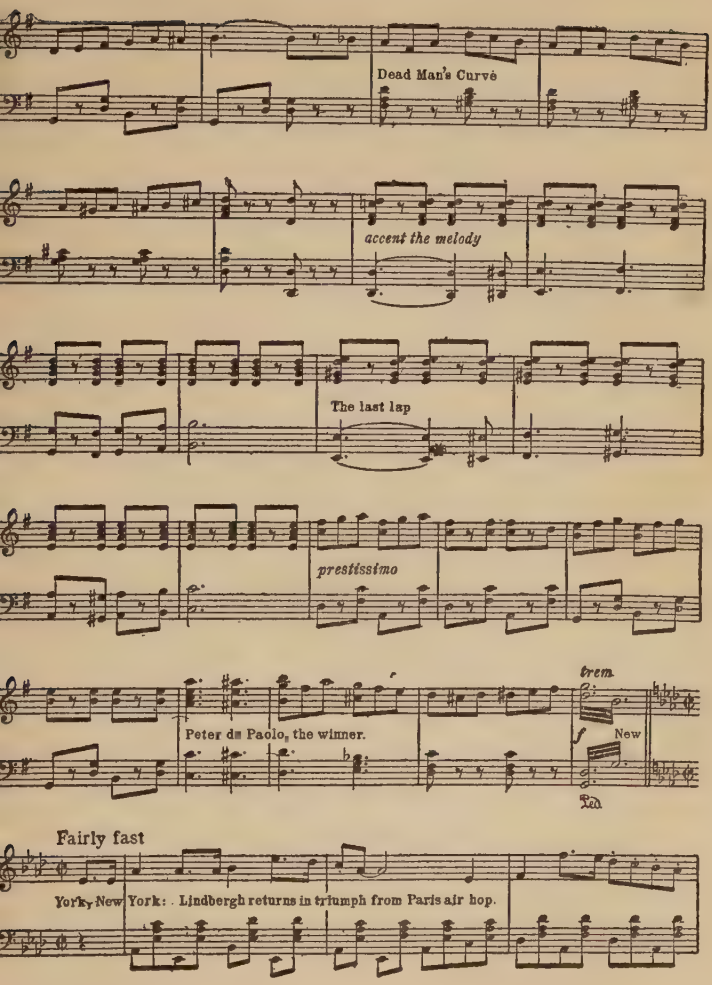

A water tower was effective in quenching the flames.
Some of the ruins.
8va
Bar Harbor,
Slowly
Maine; Six-masted schooner Henrietta J. Ryan driven ashore in record gale.
con Pedale
Her entire cargo of waterproof sheeting was totally destroyed.

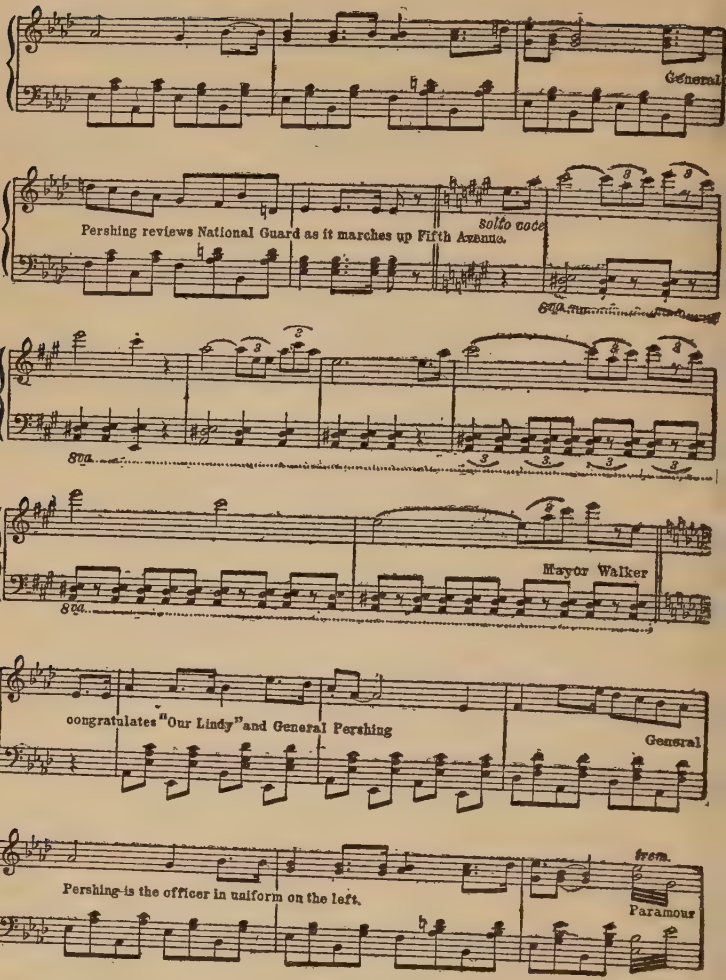
MOVIELESS MOVIES


Not too slowly
New York, New York:- Chieftains of the
Ogalalla Sioux Indians visit Mayor Walker
The guests were met by a delegation on the City Hall steps. In center of
group, Chief Ah-what-a-boob-he-is, in derby hat.
The Chiefs
perform an ancient tribal dance in honor of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment.
Indianapolis, Indiana:-

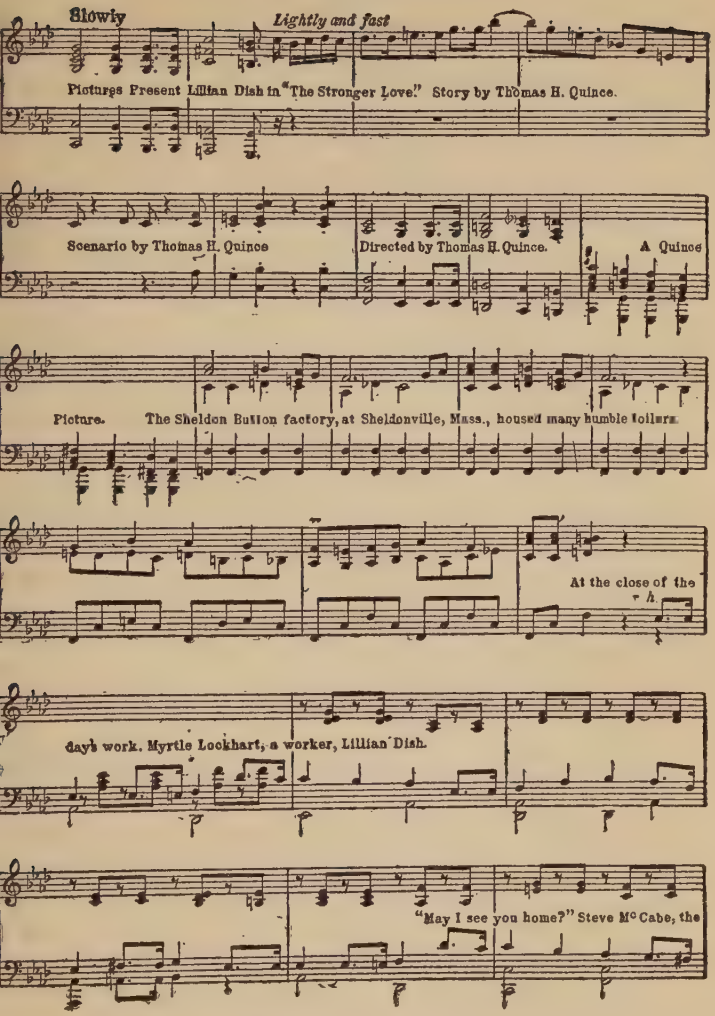

Lively
Daring drivers clash in annual speed test.
A view of the stands.
At the starting line.
They're off!
presto

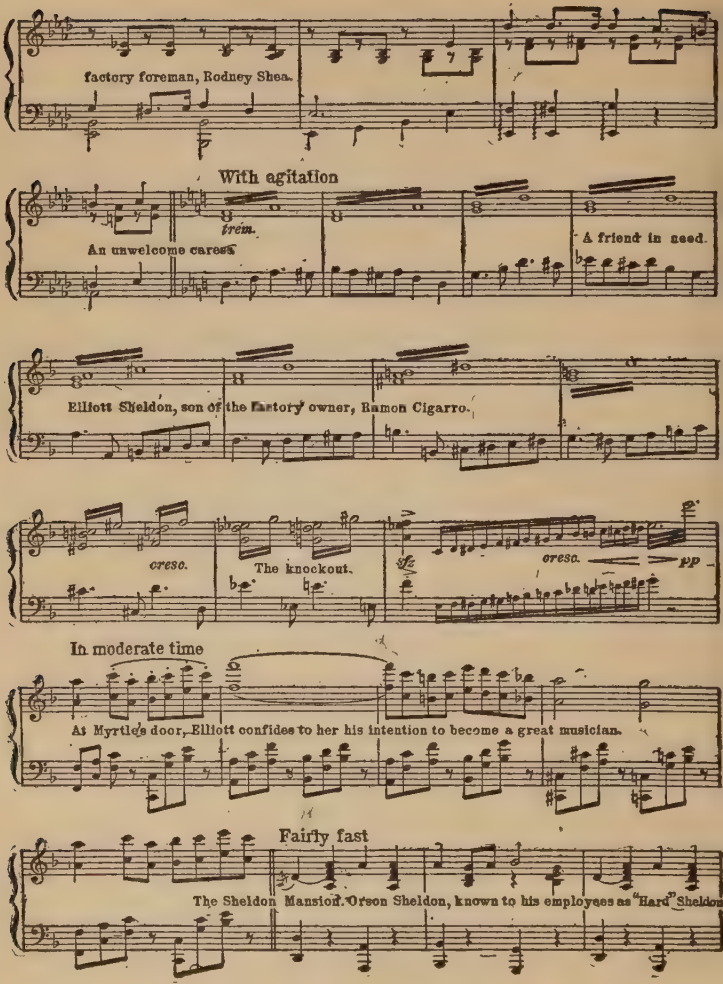
MOVIELESS MOVIES

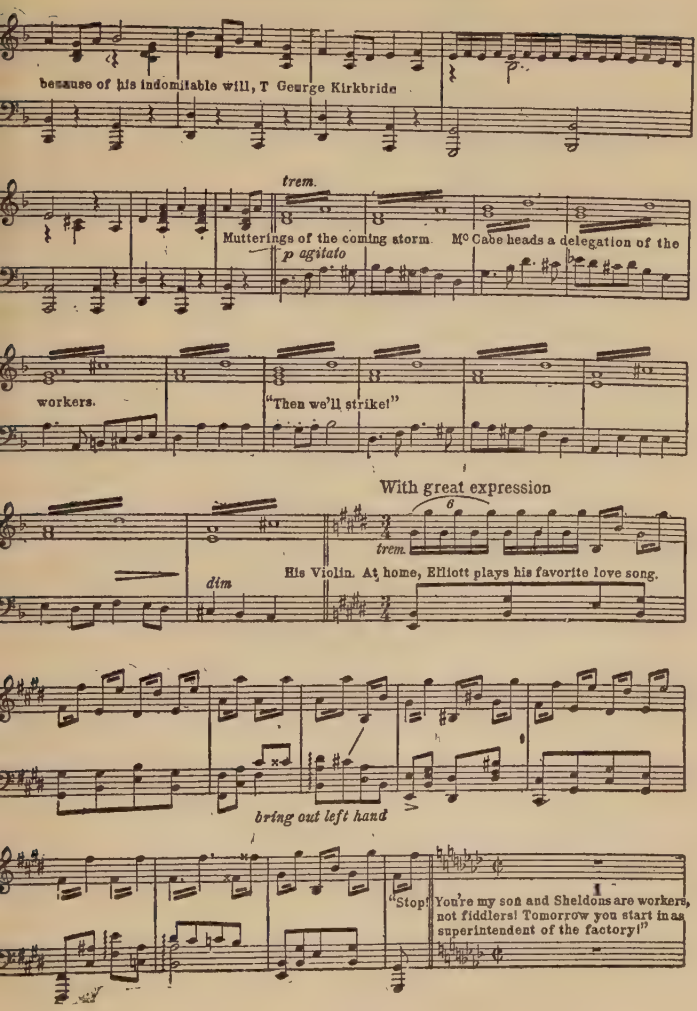


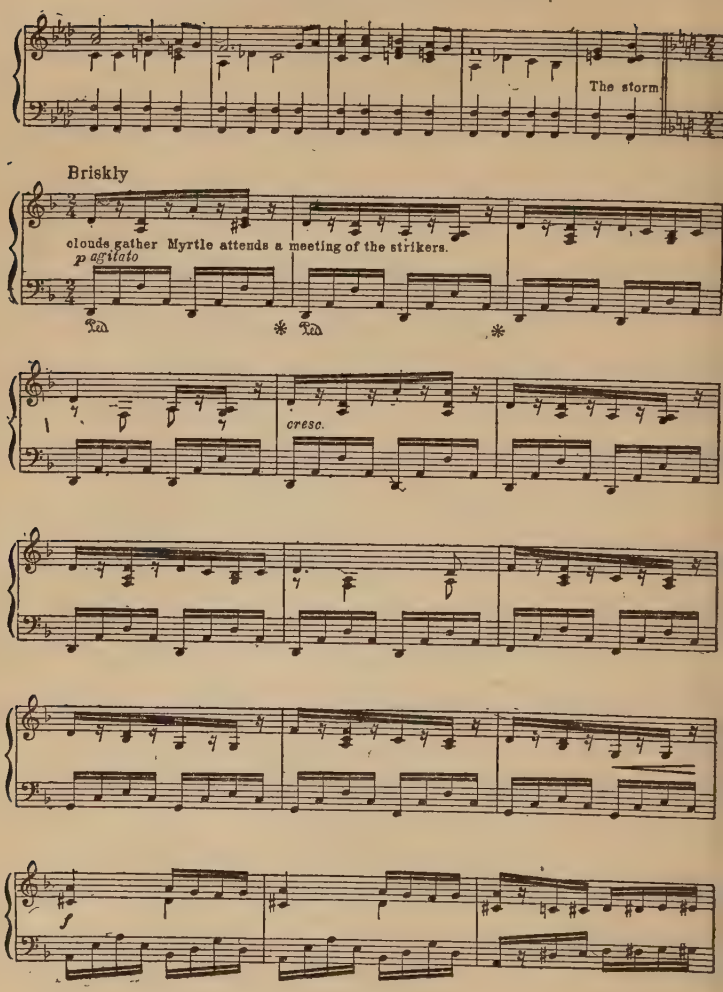

General
Pershing reviews National Guard as it marches up Fifth Avenue.
solto voce
8va
8va
8va
Mayor Walker
congratulates "Our Lindy" and General Pershing
General
trem.
Pershing is the officer in uniform on the left.
Paramour

MOVIELESS MOVIES

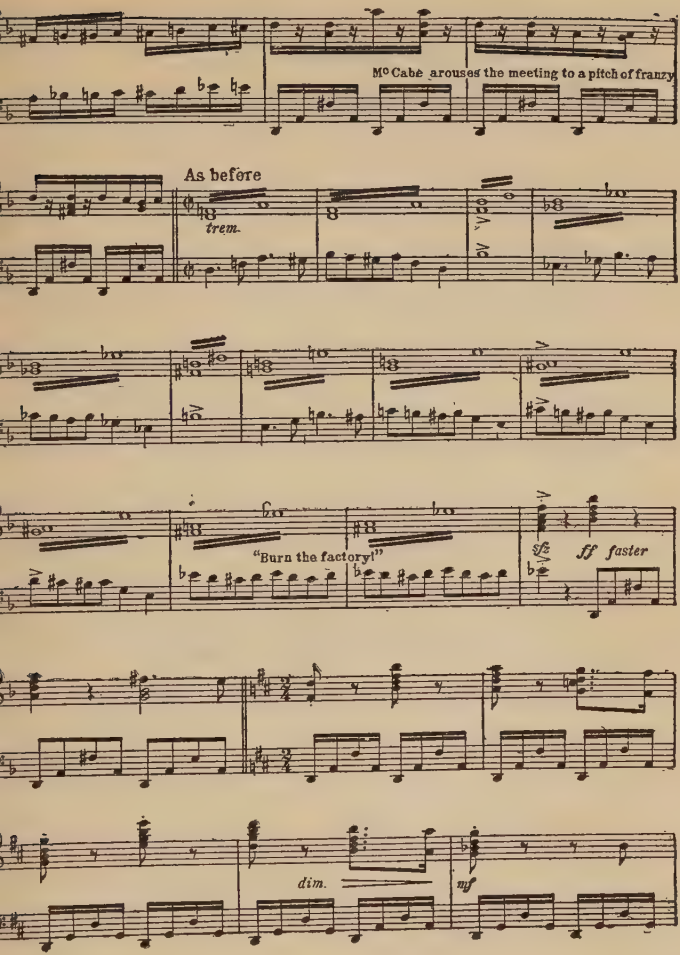

Slowly
Lightly and fast
Pictures Present Lillian Dish in "The Stronger Love." Story by Thomas H. Quince.
Scenario by Thomas H. Quince
Directed by Thomas H. Quince.
A Quince
Picture. The Sheldon Button factory, at Sheldonville, Mass., housed many humble toilers.
At the close of the
day's work. Myrtle Lockhart, a worker, Lillian Dish.
"May I see you home?" Steve Mc Cabe, the

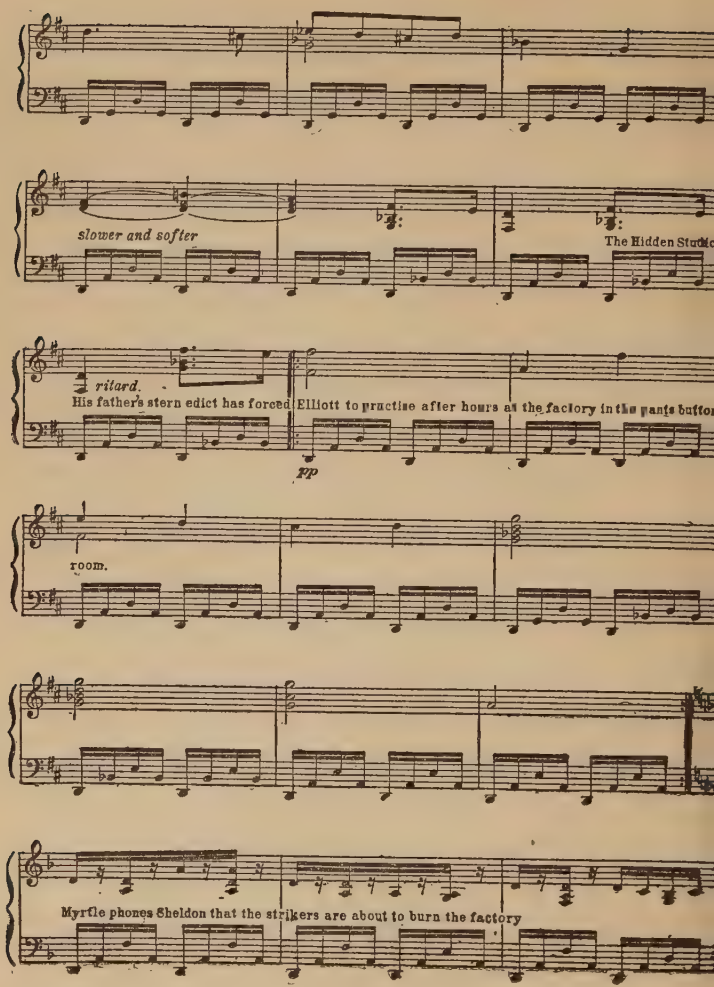

factory foreman, Rodney Shea.
With agitation
trem.
An unwelcome caress
A friend in need.
Elliott Sheldon, son of the factory owner, Ramon Cigarro.
cresc.
The knockout.
cresc.
pp
In moderate time
At Myrtle's door, Elliott confides to her his intention to become a great musician.
Fairly fast
The Sheldon Mansion. Orson Sheldon, known to his employees as "Hard" Sheldon


because of his indomitable will, T George Kirkbride
trem.
Mutterings of the coming storm
p agitato
Mc Cabe heads a delegation of the
workers.
"Then we'll strike!"
With great expression
trem.
dim
His Violin. At home, Elliott plays his favorite love song.
bring out left hand
"Stop!
You're my son and Sheldons are workers, not fiddlers! Tomorrow you start in as superintendent of the factory!"

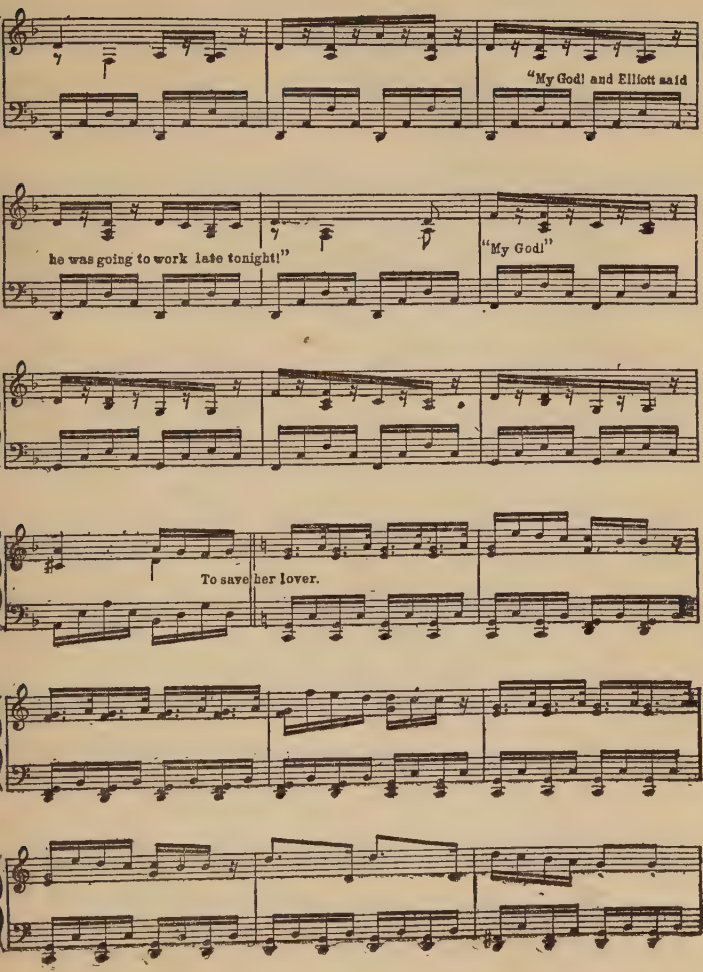

The storm
Briskly
clouds gather Myrtle attends a meeting of the strikers.
p agitato
cresc.
f

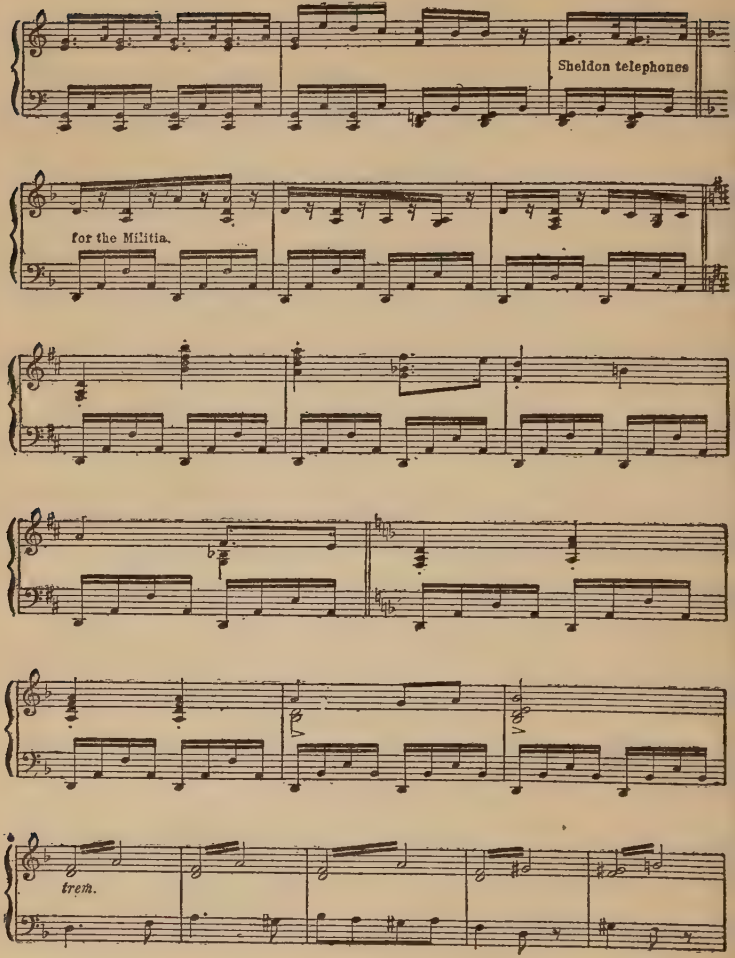
MOVIELESS MOVIES

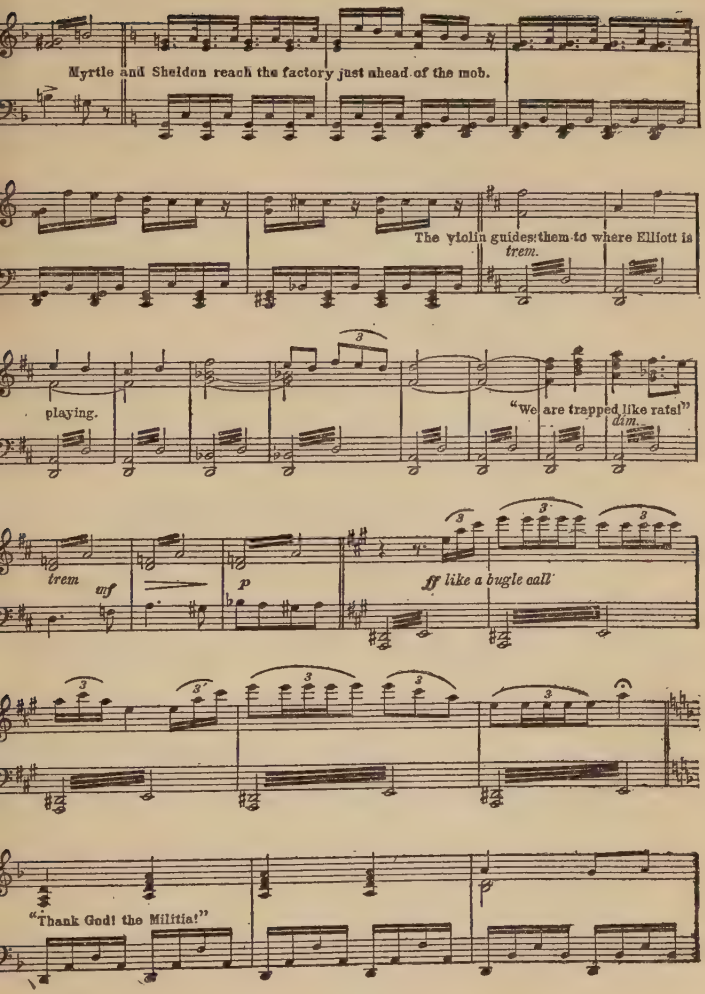


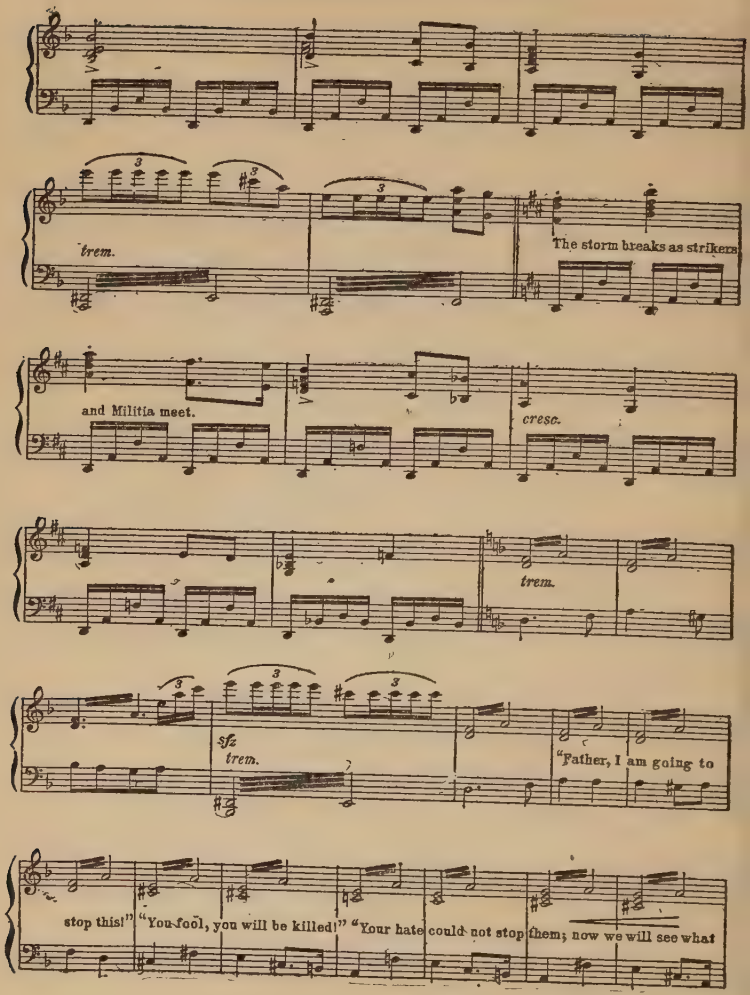

slower and softer
The Hidden Studio
ritard.
His father's stern edict has forced Elliott to practise after hours at the factory in the pants button
pp
room.
Myrtle phones Sheldon that the strikers are about to burn the factory

MOVIELESS MOVIES

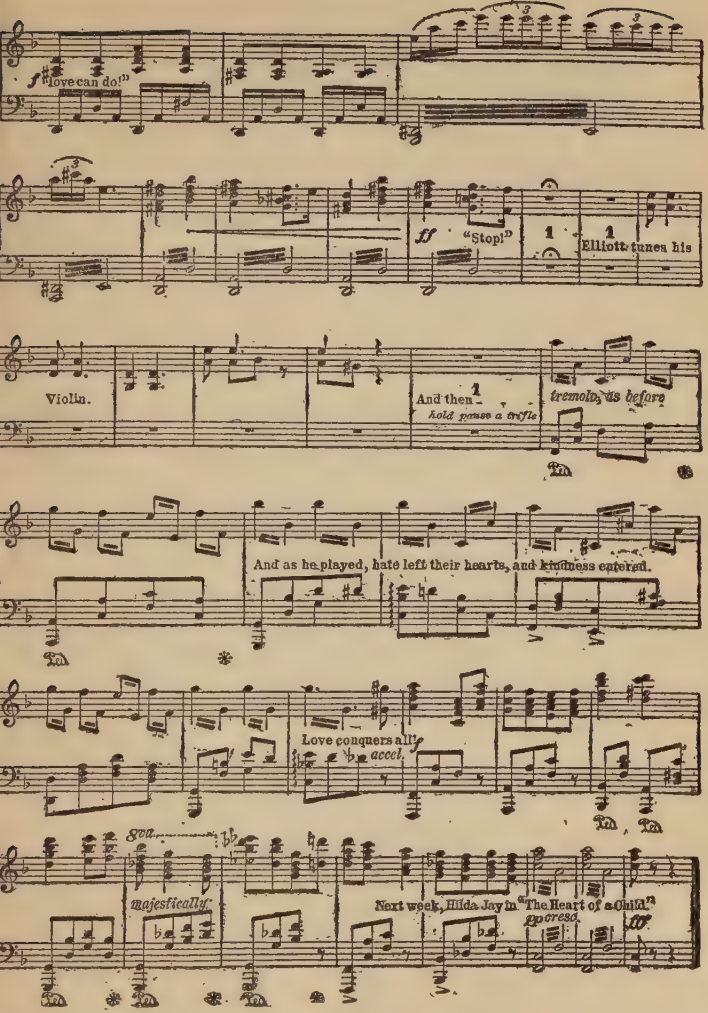



Sheldon telephones
for the Militia.
trem.


Myrtle and Sheldon reach the factory just ahead of the mob.
The violin guides them to where Elliott is
trem.
playing.
"We are trapped like rats!"
dim.
trem
mf
p
ff like a bugle call
"Thank God! the Militia!"


trem.
The storm breaks as strikers
and Militia meet.
cresc.
trem.
sfz
trem.
"Father, I am going to
stop this!" "You fool, you will be killed!" "Your hate could not stop them; now we will see what

MOVIELESS MOVIES



Note to Performers: Movieless Movies is most effective when done by two persons, but may be done as a monologue. In the former case, the piano should be placed close to, and as prominently as, the speaker, for the reason that the sketch depends quite as much on the music as on the spoken titles for its effect.

The SPEAKER should avoid any attempt at dramatic effect. Titles on the screen have no inflection.

The PIANIST should be specially careful to play pianissimo while the titles are being spoken and to strengthen the tone immediately upon completion of a speech.

IMMORALIA

HUSH MONEY

CHARACTERS:

The Man
The Manicure
The Hotel Detective

SCENE:

A room in a hotel.

[*Seated in an easy chair is a rugged, elderly man. His clothes are obviously new and expensive, but the acute observer guesses that he has not been prosperous long. He is smoking a big cigar.*

[*Seated next to him, on the other side of a little table, which is covered with her instruments, is a very pretty manicurist, busily at work on the man's fingers.*

[*There is a pause.*

THE MAN

Er—miss?

THE MANICURE (*too agreeably*)

Yes, Mr. Quintard?

THE MAN

You—you don't mind my cigar?

THE MANICURE

Oh, no! It's a good cigar. The other hand, please.

I never mind good cigars. It's only when they touch off five-centers that I don't like it. But I can't say so.

THE MAN (*slowly digesting the information*)

Oh . . . Do they smoke five-centers here?

THE MANICURE

Why not?

THE MAN

You'd think that a fellow who stops at a hotel like this would smoke nothing but clear Havanas.

THE MANICURE

You'd think so, maybe, but they don't. They make up for the hotel bills by punishing themselves on tobacco.

THE MAN (*smiling*)

I've noticed the charges are stiff.

THE MANICURE (*incredulously*)

You've noticed it?

THE MAN

Shouldn't I?

THE MANICURE

They say—they say you're worth between forty and fifty millions. Isn't that true, Mr. Quintard?

THE MAN (*shrugging his shoulders*)

It may be true.

THE MANICURE (*astonished*)

You don't know?

THE MAN

I haven't any idea. (*With slow, heavy utterance*) You see, it's all so new to me. I wasn't born rich.

THE MANICURE

No?

THE MAN

I haven't been rich very long. (*Simply*) I'm not ashamed to admit it. Lordy, no! It's not six months since all I had in the world was a toothbrush and a pack of creditors.

THE MANICURE (*indicating his nails*)

Do you want me to color them?

THE MAN

Do what you like. (*Reflectively, slowly*) Prospecting: that's been my life since I was a boy. Looking for copper where there wasn't any; looking for gold and never finding it; hunting for silver and missing it by twenty-four hours. I've been hungry. I've been cold. I've been lonely. I've slept on my pack so often that a mattress feels queer to me. I've been lost in the desert, with rattlesnakes and coyotes for company. I've been three-quarters dead with thirst, and I've been nine-tenths dead with disappointment. What a life!

HE MANICURE

You struck it rich at last.

HE MAN

Yes; very rich—oil.

HE MANICURE

They say you've banked over five millions already.

HE MAN

Yes, that's true.

THE MANICURE

Some men have all the luck!

THE MAN

Luck? I don't know. After thirty years of prospecting—after thirty years of hoping—after thirty years of working, digging, sweating—luck? (*He thrusts out his right hand*) Look at that ham! Does that look like the hand of a lucky man?

THE MANICURE (*laying her hand upon his encouragingly*)

You'll be getting married now, won't you, Mr. Quintard? (*He shakes his head slowly*) I know lots of girls that would take you in a minute.

THE MAN (*honestly*)

You flatter me, Miss—Miss——

THE MANICURE

De Rubye. Pearl de Rubye: that's my name. (*She smiles alluringly*) As I was saying, you've got a way with you that makes an awful hit with the girls! It's the truth, Mr. Quintard!

THE MAN (*smiling*)

It's no use, Miss—Miss De Rubye. I'm a married man, and I've got two children.

THE MANICURE (*disappointed*)

Yeah?

THE MAN

My wife is already starting to break into society. I don't blame her. Would you? After thirty years of counting every penny, and doing every lick of

the housework—when she had a house to live in—she's got a right to have her fun.

THE MANICURE (*unconvincingly*)

Yes . . . She must be pretty old by this time.

THE MAN (*dreamily*)

She's as old as she looks to me—and I think she's twenty. You see, she's stuck to me through it all from the very beginning. She's earned her fun.

THE MANICURE

You're keen about her, aren't you?

THE MAN (*simply*)

I'd cut off my right hand before I'd do anything to hurt her.

THE MANICURE (*rising*)

Well, I'm through.

THE MAN (*peeling a bill from an enormous roll*)

Here: five dollars. Keep the change. (*She does not take it*) Take it. It's not going to break me.

THE MANICURE

My charge is more than that.

THE MAN

More than five dollars?

THE MANICURE

A whole lot more.

THE MAN

Well, I thought five dollars was plenty, but I'm no piker. (*He peels off another bill*) Tell me the bad news.

THE MANICURE

My charge is going to be a hundred thousand dollars.

THE MAN

I beg your pardon?

THE MANICURE

One hundred thousand dollars. In cash: no phony checks.

THE MAN (*incredulous*)

Look here, are you trying to play a joke on me?

THE MANICURE

When I'm joking, I smile. I'm not smiling now—see?

THE MAN (*sparring for time*)

A hundred thousand? Isn't that a little high?

THE MANICURE

Not if you'd cut off your right hand before you'd do something to hurt your wife.

THE MAN

What do you mean?

THE MANICURE

We're alone, Mr. Quintard. You sent for me to come to your room. Well, I've come.

THE MAN

That's very good of you.

THE MANICURE

I've been here, alone with you, for half an hour. The door's closed. That's against the rules of the hotel.

HE MAN
I don't know the rules.

HE MANICURE (*locking the door*)
The door's locked! You know you shouldn't have done that!

HE MAN
Go on.

HE MANICURE
You sent for me. You got me up here. (*With a wealth of expression*) You attacked me.

HE MAN
That's ridiculous!

HE MANICURE
Is it? If I say you did, who'll believe you didn't?

HE MAN
Do you look as if you had been attacked?

HE MANICURE (*tearing her waist in two with a sudden movement*) Do I look it now? (*She pauses*) Listen, Mr. Quintard, I'll stop at nothing! I'm in earnest! I want that money!

HE MAN (*calmly*)
You're not going to get it.

HE MANICURE
Would you rather have the story go back to your wife? The story how you were arrested in a hotel—dragged into a police court—tried—found guilty—fined—sent to jail—because you tried to attack a girl? Think how the newspapers are going to play that up! Think it over, Mr. Quintard! Think

it over! You've been married thirty years, you say. Maybe your wife trusts you. But when she reads how we were found together in this room—alone—with the door locked—and with me looking like this—will she believe you? Mr. Quintard, there ain't a woman living that'll do that! (*She pauses, breathless*) Are you going to pay?

THE MAN

For the last time, are you joking?

THE MANICURE

Not I! Nay, nay!

THE MAN

Very well, then. You don't get one single, solitary cent!

THE MANICURE (*snarling*)

No?

THE MAN

It's not that I mind giving away a hundred thousand dollars——

THE MANICURE

It isn't?

THE MAN (*pauses; puffs his cigar quietly*)

It's just that I object to being blackmailed by a dirty little slut.

THE MANICURE (*losing her temper*)

I'll get you for that, you big bum! I'll make you pay! I'll show you you can't call me names like that and get away with it! I'll fix you good! (*She screams*) Help! Help! (*She tears away more of her costume*) Help! Oh, help!

[*She upsets the table with her manicuring instruments.*

THE MAN (*sitting motionless in his chair*)
You'll have to call louder than that!

THE MANICURE
Help! Oh, help! Help! Help!

[*She issues a series of blood-curdling screams.*

THE MAN (*with a connoisseur's appreciation*)
That's much better.

THE HOTEL DETECTIVE (*hammering on the door*)
Let me in! Let me in!

THE MANICURE
Help! Help!

THE DETECTIVE
Open the door!

THE MANICURE
He's locked it! (*She turns to the Man, and waves the key before his eyes*) Give me the key! Give me the key, you coward! (*She transfers the key from one hand to the other*) Ah! Help! Ah!

[*She thrusts the key into the lock, and turns it.*

THE DETECTIVE (*flinging the door open, and entering*) What's going on in here?

[*The faces of curious guests peer through the door.*

THE MANICURE (*sobbing, hysterical*)
He sent for me to manicure his nails. He got me alone. He locked the door. He attacked me. Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!

THE DETECTIVE

This is a serious charge, Mr. Quintard.

THE MANICURE

The coward! Oh, the coward! Aren't you going to do something? Aren't you going to do something?

THE DETECTIVE (*crossing to the man, and touching him on the shoulder*) I'm sorry, but you'll have to come with me, Mr. Quintard.

THE MAN (*still sitting in his chair*)

Wait! . . . This woman says I attacked her?

THE MANICURE

He did! He did! He knows he did!

THE MAN

I have been sitting motionless in this chair for the last half hour. (*He raises his hand impressively*) I call upon everybody to witness that this cigar is lighted—and that the ash—which would have fallen off at the slightest struggle—is two inches long.

[*There is a gasp of understanding from the spectators.*

CURTAIN

HUSH MONEY

Author's Note:

I am dealing here with one of the oldest themes known to literature. Both the Greeks and Romans foreshadowed it. Italian authors of the Cinquecento related how noblemen, unjustly accused, proved their innocence by the fact that brimming glasses of wine were unspilled on the arms of their chairs. In France, a century later, the tale was varied to provide the accused man, unknown to his accuser, with a wound more than sufficient to prevent him from rising.

Sir Walter Ralegh's introduction of tobacco furnished subsequent generations of authors with an even better variant of the basic situation: the suspect exhibited his fragile churchwarden pipe, burning, and unbroken, to refute the charge.

The invention of cigars gave birth to the most modern improvement, and half a dozen tales, in as many different languages, have celebrated the Russian Prince, the French Duc, the German Baron, and the Spanish Grandee, whose discriminating tastes in tobacco extricated them triumphantly from their embarrassments.

So far as I know, I am the first to modify the theme so that it is at home in a characteristically American setting.

LOVE IS BLIND

THE CHARACTERS:
A Bride
A Bridegroom
A Stranger

THE SCENE:
A Hotel.

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES: (*as the curtain rises*)
We are in a hotel. Here are doors. (*He indicates*) One—two—three. There are doubtless still more, but they wouldn't interest you. (*He waves towards the left*) They come: a bride and a groom.

[*The bride and groom enter diffidently, covered with embarrassment, and with rice, which trickles to the floor in a steady stream.*

THE GROOM (*indicating the first door*)
This is our room.

THE BRIDE
Are you sure, Archibald?

THE GROOM (*examining the tag on a key*)
No; it's this.

[*He indicates the second door.*

THE BRIDE
Our little love nest!

THE GROOM (*comparing the tag and the number on the door*)
It's this one. (*He indicates the third door, and opens it with the key*) See?

THE BRIDE (*sighing*)
Archibald!

THE GROOM (*trying to be casual*)
Let's go in.

THE BRIDE
No! No! No! No!

THE GROOM
Dearest?

THE BRIDE (*taking the key from him and entering the room*)
I'll go in.

THE GROOM
Not I? Honey, how will you unhook yourself?

THE BRIDE
Never fear! (*She pauses*) Have you a cigar?

THE GROOM (*producing one hastily*)
Do you want it?

THE BRIDE
Go downstairs and smoke it, and then, in half an hour—(*shyly*)—come to me.

THE GROOM (*crestfallen*)
In half an hour?

THE BRIDE
Well, then, twenty minutes.

THE GROOM
Twenty minutes?

THE BRIDE

Fifteen minutes.

THE GROOM

Quarter of an hour?

THE BRIDE

Ten minutes. (*She cuts short his protestations*) It can't be less than ten minutes! (*She half-closes the door: with a mixture of shyness and bravado*) I'll be waiting for you—lover!

[*She puts up her lips to be kissed. He kisses her. She closes the door.*

[*He staggers out.*

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES (*glancing at his watch indulgently*)

For the sake of argument, we'll admit that ten minutes have elapsed.

[*The groom staggers in. His cigar is burnt to a butt. He throws the butt away. He pulls out a pocket mirror. He spruces himself. He braces himself, smiles fatuously, and scratches timidly at the first door—the wrong one.*

[*There is no reply from within. He scratches again.*

THE GROOM

Honey! Oh, honey! (*No answer. He raises his voice*) Honey! Oh, honey! (*He pauses, bewildered. Then a smile of comprehension steals over his features, and, very gently, he tries the doorknob. It*

fails to open. Now he knocks) Honey! Oh, honey! Let me in, honey!

[*The door flies open, and a portly man in bathrobe and slippers stands on the threshold.*

THE STRANGER

Say, mister, this ain't a beehive. It's a bathroom.

CURTAIN

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF . . .

CHARACTERS:

The Captain
His Wife
The Bird

SCENE:

Where You Will.

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES (*as the curtain rises, disclosing an interior decorated simply with a parrot in its cage, and a very angry sea-captain*) It is necessary, before we begin, to tell you something about this play. This person here——

[*The Captain scowls.*

—is the captain of a ship, returned home after a long, long voyage. He is Scotch, and he hasn't seen his wife—who isn't Scotch—in six years. Six years —just fancy that!

He arrived home an hour ago. He wasn't expected.

[*The Captain scowls.*

He didn't send up his name, and, of course, not even a sea-captain's wife expects to keep one slavey for six years, so he wasn't recognized when he

rang his own doorbell. That gave him a pretty idea: he sent up word that he was just a man to see Mrs. Captain, and she sent back an answer that she'd be down in a minute.

[*The Captain scowls.*

In his playful manner, he was going to surprise her. He was going to overwhelm her with joy by letting her see his sweet self, and he's been sitting here, waiting more or less patiently, while she's been powdering her nose.

Now everything would have been all right, because after waiting six years, an hour more isn't much; but you will notice a bird in the background. The Captain was in good humor when he arrived, but he isn't in good humor now—far from it! The bird has been talking——

THE BIRD

Duckums! Duckums! Duckums! Does 'oo love 'oo duckums?

THE CAPTAIN (*to the bird*)

Avast, ye chicken-livered landlubber!

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

You begin to catch the drift. (*He bows and retires*)

THE BIRD

Duckums! Duckums! Duckums! Does 'oo love 'oo duckums?

THE CAPTAIN (*hoarsely*)

Pipe down! Belay! Stow it!

HE BIRD

Polly wants a kiss! Polly wants a kiss! Polly wants a kiss!

HE CAPTAIN

Silence between decks!

[*He flings his overcoat over the cage.*

HE BIRD (*decrescendo*)

Nighty - night! Nighty - night! Nighty - night!

[*There is a sound of nine kisses, in series of three.*

HE CAPTAIN

Br-r-r-r-r!

[*From his vest-pocket he produces a little pill-box, opens it, and places it on the center table. From his hip-pocket he produces a monstrous pistol, examines it, and replaces it.*

HE WIFE (*entering*)

Did you wish to see me?

HE CAPTAIN

Aye, aye!

HE WIFE

Ah! A sea-faring man?

HE CAPTAIN

Aye, aye!

HE WIFE

I am fond of sea-faring men. My husband is a sea-faring man.

HE CAPTAIN (*exploding*)

Have ye been fond of that worthless, bandy-legged, good-for-naething scum, Wullie McCrae?

THE WIFE (*surprised*)

Willie McCrae? Willie McCrae? You mean my neighbor?

THE CAPTAIN

Ye ken weel enow wham I mean! Tell me, woman, has he been mair than a neighbor to ye?

THE WIFE

How dare you? How dare you? What right have you to— (*she approaches him; starts*) It isn't! . . . It cannot be! . . . It cannot be!

THE CAPTAIN

Aye, aye!

THE WIFE (*throwing her arms about his neck*)

Angus! Angus! How you surprised me!

THE CAPTAIN (*wrathfully*)

I did, did I?

THE WIFE

Home at last, after six years! Angus, you didn't even send up your name.

THE CAPTAIN

Nay.

THE WIFE

I didn't know you were in port at all.

THE CAPTAIN

Nay.

THE WIFE

I hadn't heard from you in months and months. I had no idea you'd be here so soon.

THE CAPTAIN

Sae I see.

HE WIFE

Come, tell me all about yourself. When did you land?

HE CAPTAIN

Last necht.

HE WIFE

Why didn't you come right here?

HE CAPTAIN (*remorsefully*)

Aye; why didna I?

HE WIFE

What do you mean, Angus?

HE CAPTAIN

Come here, lassie! (*He grasps her roughly by the shoulders*) How have ye been spendin' yer time whilst I've been awa'?

HE WIFE

I've been busy.

HE CAPTAIN

I'll warrant!

HE WIFE

Sewing—reading—looking after the house—church twice on Sundays—writing to you—and to bed early.

HE CAPTAIN

An' Wullie McCrae?

HE WIFE

What about Willie McCrae?

HE CAPTAIN

This!

[*He pulls his overcoat away from the birdcage.*

THE BIRD

Duckums! Duckums! Duckums! Does 'oo love 'oo duckums?

THE CAPTAIN (*a growl of fury*)

A-r-r-r-r-h!

THE BIRD

Polly wants a kiss! Polly wants a kiss! Polly wants a kiss!

THE CAPTAIN

Whaur did he learn that, woman?

THE WIFE (*flinging the coat over the cage again*)

Angus, come here. Sit down. I have a confession to make to you.

THE CAPTAIN (*sitting*)

I thocht as muckle! (*He draws his pistol*) Gae on, woman! Confess!

THE WIFE (*starting at the sight of the weapon, but controlling herself admirably*)

Angus, you've always been a cold, cold man.

THE CAPTAIN

Is Wullie McCrae cauld?

THE WIFE

Mr. McCrae has nothing to do with this.

THE CAPTAIN

Ha? Is it *Mister* McCrae the noo? Gae on.

THE WIFE (*disregarding the interruption*)

You've always been cold, Angus, and I need love. It's because you're Scotch, and I'm not. But I need love, Angus. I'm a loving woman, and I must have affection—and you've never given it to me. So the

thought came to me, Angus—(*she casts down her eyes*)—the thought came to me that if I trained that bird, and—and if you heard him when you came home, it might change your disposition.

THE CAPTAIN (*incredulously*)

Ye trained that bird?

THE WIFE (*nodding, and beginning to weep*)

It's been a labor of love, and that's all the appreciation you give me for it! It isn't right! It isn't fair! No; it isn't! (*She raises a pathetic countenance*) Night after night, Angus, till I was so tired I could hardly keep my eyes open, I sat here, teaching that bird. I was doing it for you, Angus—that thought was always in my mind—so it didn't matter how tired I was: I would not give up. No, I would not give up! (*She calls to the bird*) Duckums! Duckums! Duckums!

THE BIRD (*from under the cover*)

Duckums! Duckums! Duckums!

THE WIFE

Polly wants a kiss!

THE BIRD

Polly wants a kiss! Polly wants a kiss! Polly wants a kiss!

[*There is the sound of nine kisses, in series of three.*

THE WIFE

Do you understand now? My name is Polly, too. Didn't that ever strike you? It was my innocent little scheme to make you a better husband than

you have been—oh, a much better husband! For six years, Angus, for six long years, I've trained that bird—and here, here is the thanks you have for me!

[*Dramatically she indicates the pistol, and falls to the floor, sobbing.*

THE CAPTAIN (*presently*)

Aweel . . . (*He puts away the pistol*) Hm! Hm Aweel! . . . Pull yersel' taegither, lassie, I dinna desairve a woman sae affectionate as yersel'.

THE WIFE (*crawling to her knees*)

Angus! Angus!

THE CAPTAIN

In sorra, an' I say it to ye like a mon—when I first cam into this hoos, an' heard that bird, I thocht——

THE WIFE

I know what you thought!

THE CAPTAIN (*remorsefully*)

I put that box of poison on the table—'tis a terrible swift poison that I bought in Sumatra—an I had a mind to mak ye tak it! Aye, lassie, I was gaeing to mak ye tak it at the point of my pistol an' I was gaeing to sit here, an' watch ye dee (*With the utmost contrition*) Lassie, oh, lassie!

THE WIFE (*rising with his help*)

Angus, perhaps you'll love me better now.

THE CAPTAIN

Aye! That I will!

[*He embraces her eagerly.*

THE WIFE (*presently*)
Where's your luggage, Angus?

THE CAPTAIN
Ootside.

THE WIFE
Go and get it.

THE CAPTAIN
Aye, aye! I'll be back in a meenute!
[*He seizes his overcoat, uncovering the bird cage, and dashes out.*

THE WIFE (*looking after him reflectively*)
Willie McCrae! Willie McCrae!

THE BIRD
Hold me close, Willie! Hold me close, Willie! Hold me close, Willie, Willie, Willie!
[*The Wife quietly takes the box of poison, and empties it into the cage. The bird pecks at it. The Wife draws a cover over the cage. . . .*

THE CAPTAIN (*outside*)
I'm comin', lassie! I'm comin'!

THE WIFE
Aye.
[*She smiles inscrutably.*

CURTAIN

THE PAST PLUPERFECT

CHARACTERS:

She

He

THE SCENE:

An Apartment.

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES (*as the curtain rises*)

We present to you, ladies and gentlemen, a play that is tensely dramatic. You have but to glance at our heroine, pacing up and down her boudoir, to realize that. It is midnight—or later. She is expecting a caller.

[*He withdraws to the side of the stage.*

[*She stops her nervous pacing to listen. Then she walks to the window and stands peering out. There is a light rap at the door.*

HE (*without turning around*)

Come in. (*There enters a man in evening dress*) Sit down. Do as I say. (*He sits, visibly mystified and astonished. She keeps her back turned to him*) Reginald—(*he looks surprised*) you have told me everything. (*The man on the sofa looks still more startled*) You never saw her again. Did you? . . . Did you?

E (*huskily*)

No.

SHE

You kissed her—but only once.

HE (*still startled, but rising to the occasion*)

Yes.

SHE

You kissed her—here. (*She indicates her throat. He peers at her to see what she is indicating, but her back is turned*) And then, what did she do? (*He scratches his head, puzzled, but she continues*) She slapped your face.

HE

That's right!

SHE (*striding emotionally across the room, and back again*)

You have told me your past, nothing but your past, and your whole past. I honor you for your candor.

HE

Don't mention it.

SHE

But I do honor you, Reginald! And I feel that I should be equally frank.

HE (*huskily*)

Genevieve!

SHE

Reginald, there should be no secrets between us. I am going to tell you everything! Everything! Everything!

HE

Oh, Genevieve!

SHE

The first man who ever kissed me—here—was a scoundrel. He took advantage of my innocence.

HE

The brute!

SHE

First he kissed me here (*she indicates her cheek*); then he kissed me here (*she indicates her lips*); then he kissed me here (*she indicates her throat*). Then—then——

HE

Then?

SHE

Then I kissed him. The second man who kissed me here was a cad.

HE

The dirty dog!

SHE

He took advantage of my innocence. First he kissed me here—then he kissed me here—then he kissed me here——

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

The lights will be extinguished for two seconds to indicate the lapse of two minutes.

HE

The ninth man who kissed me—here——

IE

The reprobate!

SHE

First he kissed me here——

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

The lights will be extinguished for four seconds t indicate the lapse of four minutes.

SHE

The twenty-third man who kissed me—here——

HE

The low ruffian!

SHE

He took advantage of my innocence.

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

The lights will be extinguished for five seconds t indicate the lapse of an hour.

SHE

The two hundred and sixty-fourth man wh kissed me—here——

HE

The foul deceiver!

SHE

First he kissed me here—then he . . .

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

The lights will be extinguished for seven second to indicate the lapse of several hours. (*With grea feeling*) 'Tis now dawn!

SHE

The seven thousand, seven hundred and seventy-seventh man who kissed me—here—was no gentleman. He took advantage of my innocence. First he kissed me here—and then he kissed me here—and then he kissed me here. And then—then—I kissed him.

[*She pauses and wipes her eyes.*

And now, now, I have told you everything—everything!—and I can meet you in perfect frankness. We shall have no secrets from one another. I shall not reproach you, and you shall not reproach me. Come, Reginald!

[*She turns, opens her arms, and for the first time faces the man on the sofa. An expression of terror crosses her features. She screams.*

My God! It's my husband!

[*She faints.*

CURTAIN

COSTUME DE RIGUEUR

(A Shadow Play)

CHARACTERS:

The Doctor (*an Orthopedic Specialist*)
The Nurse
The Patient

SCENE:

The Doctor's Office.

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES

I have been requested to say nothing about this little play. It is a good play, because as it goes along, it explains itself.

[*He bows and retires. The curtain rises.*

[*The Nurse is standing at attention at the rear door of the Doctor's office. The Doctor bustles in, in hat and overcoat, very gruff, in very bad humor, very much in a hurry, and very pompous.*

THE DOCTOR (*taking off his coat*)

What time is it?

THE NURSE

Quarter after three.

THE DOCTOR

I'm late. I had to stay at the hospital longer than I expected. They brought in a man with a Potts' fracture just as I was leaving, and he wanted

me to look at it. As if I haven't seen enough Potts' fractures! Make a note, Miss McCallum, find out the man's name, and send him a bill.

[*He bustles to his desk, and skims through his mail.*

THE NURSE

Yes, sir.

THE DOCTOR

A stiff bill. That will serve him right: making me late for my office hours! (*He wheels gruffly upon the nurse.*) Well, well, well? Who's the first patient?

THE NURSE

A Miss Nelson.

THE DOCTOR

New patient?

THE NURSE

Yes, sir.

THE DOCTOR

Prosperous?

THE NURSE

Not promising.

THE DOCTOR

Well, well, send her in. We'll see what she's got.

THE NURSE (*going to the door, and hesitating*)

Doctor——

THE DOCTOR

I said, send her in.

THE NURSE

Doctor, she's not prepared.

THE DOCTOR

What? What? What do you mean?

THE NURSE

I told her that you insisted upon her disrobing before she entered your office. She declined.

THE DOCTOR

Go out and tell her again.

THE NURSE

Yes, sir.

[*Exit.*

[*The telephone rings.*

THE DOCTOR (*taking up the 'phone*)

Hello! Hello! . . . Wrong number! . . . I say you've got a wrong number!

[*He hangs up.*

THE NURSE (*re-entering*)

Doctor, she absolutely refuses to undress.

THE DOCTOR

Tell her I won't see her till she does.

THE NURSE

Yes, doctor.

[*Exit.*

[*The telephone rings.*

THE DOCTOR

Hello! Hello! . . . I told you once you had a wrong number. . . . Yes, this is the doctor's office. . . . This is the doctor speaking. . . . Yes. Yes. . . . No: I don't make appointments. You'll have to come and wait your turn. . . . Office hours three to six. . . . Goodbye. (*He hangs up. The*

telephone rings). What? . . . Yes. Three to six. (*He hangs up again. The telephone rings again*) What? (*He shouts*) Yes! Daylight saving time! [*He hangs up once more.*

THE NURSE (*re-entering*)

Miss Nelson is prepared.

THE DOCTOR

Show her in.

*

[*The Nurse shows in a most attractive young woman, who is attired in a sheet. The Nurse withdraws. The young woman advances into the office, excessively embarrassed.*

THE PATIENT

Doctor——

THE DOCTOR (*interrupting*)

Not a word!

THE PATIENT

But Doctor——

THE DOCTOR

Will you be quiet? I don't want you to tell me what you *think* is the matter with you: I'll find that out for myself.

THE PATIENT

Doctor!

THE DOCTOR (*squelching her*)

That's why I make all new patients appear before me in this condition. Do you understand? By

watching your posture—your walk—the movement of your limbs, I learn more about you than you know about yourself.

THE PATIENT (*with desperation*)

Doctor!——

THE DOCTOR (*with authority*)

Stand still. Drop the sheet.

THE PATIENT

Oh, doctor, I couldn't——

THE DOCTOR (*furious*)

Are you going to drop the sheet or aren't you? (*The Patient drops the sheet, appearing entirely nude*) That's right. (*The Doctor surveys her critically*) Now do as I say. Bend. Keep your knees straight, and touch your toes with your fingers. Do it! Good! Stand up. Close your eyes. Stand on one foot. Raise the opposite foot. Now do the same thing with the other foot. That's right. That's very good indeed. Now stand on your toes. Raise your arms. Stretch. Bend backwards. Good. Stand still. Stand up. Stand up straight. Place your arms akimbo. Bend to the right. To the left. Stand up. Squat. Lower. Lower. Now jump as high as you can. Good! Now make believe you're running. Faster. Faster. You can run faster than that! Faster! Stop. (*The Patient carries out the directions as given*) Come here. Give me your wrist. (*He feels her pulse*) Married?

THE PATIENT

No, doctor.

THE DOCTOR (*snapping shut his watch*)

My dear young lady, your bones are straight. Your muscles are strong. Your joints are in working order. There's nothing in the world wrong with you.

THE PATIENT (*bursting into tears*)

I-I know that, doctor.

THE DOCTOR (*indulgently*)

You mean you know it, now that I've told you.

THE PATIENT

No, no, doctor: I knew it when I first came.

THE DOCTOR (*becoming irate*)

You knew it? Then what brought you to my office? That's what I'd like to know! What brought you here, young woman?

THE PATIENT (*collapsing completely*)

D-doctor—d-doctor, I-I'm tak—taking sub-subscriptions for "The B-Book of Etiquette."

CURTAIN

Author's Note:

As played at the Pinakothek, Munich, a white curtain was dropped at the point marked *, and the patient, whose shadow was silhouetted upon the curtain, wore a bathing suit. As played at the Tate, London, the lights were extinguished at the same point. As played at the Uffizi, Florence, the audience was requested to close its eyes.

While the author does not presume to dictate to his producers, he favors the use of a curtain, upon which shadows are visible, from the very beginning of the action. He cannot refrain from pointing out that the play is ideally adapted for the radio.

CON AMORE

CHARACTERS:

The Wife

The Lover

SCENE:

An Apartment

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES (*as the curtain rises*)

This play, ladies and gentlemen, finds its inspiration in the familiar triangle: the wife, the husband, and the lover. So that you shall not rashly anticipate violence, and be disappointed—for there is no violence here—I assure you that one corner of the triangle, the husband, is absent, and will stay absent. He will not return when he should—or when he should not—according to your point of view. He has gone away on whatever husbands go away on, and he will stay away.

[*He indicates the Wife, who, humming gaily to herself, executes a few dance steps.*

This is the Wife. A glance—just a glance—will tell you how much she misses her husband.

[*He bows, and is about to retire, when an afterthought strikes him.*

Folks, I want your sympathies to be with this dear

little gal right here, so I'm going to tell you that her husband—whom you will never see—is a low brute.

[*The Wife stops dancing, listens, and nods.*

He gives her a duplex apartment on Fifth Avenue, a camp in the Adirondacks, a winter home on the Riviera, and a steam yacht—but he doesn't understand her.

[*The Wife shakes her head sadly.*

He presents her with diamond necklaces, fur coats, a dozen automobiles, a box at the opera, and more money than she can spend. But what is money?

[*The Wife shrugs her shoulders in despair.*

It is nothing——

[*The Wife shakes her head.*

—and that is all she has: nothing! Now you begin to sympathize with her, don't you? I knew you would.

[*Suddenly.*

Hark!

[*A window at the rear begins to open.*

The window is opening: that's how the plot starts. I need hardly tell you that the charming young man who will enter through that window the moment I get through talking is the Lover. That's why he is entering through the window. If he weren't the Lover, he would take the elevator, or he would climb the stairs. Only a human fly—or a lover—would think of making an entrance through a twelfth story window. But if he didn't do that,

he would be commonplace, and he wants you to know that whatever his failings, he is never commonplace. *He* understands her: that's why he let the other chap marry her.

[*A young man appears at the window, but the Wife does not see him.*

There he is now. She doesn't see him. That's the way this play is written. Of course she knows he's there: she has a date with him, and, besides, this bit has been carefully rehearsed. But she won't notice the draft from that open window until he says something. That will give her a chance to register surprise, and do some acting. . . . I withdraw.

[*He goes.*

THE LOVER (*with one leg over the sill*)

Ahem! (*Louder*) Ahem! (*The Wife hears, registers surprise, and casts her eyes upon every impossible place*) Here I am, sweetheart!

THE WIFE

Ah! Ronald!

[*She rushes towards him with arms wide open.*

THE LOVER (*holding up a hand*)

Wait till I get in. This is the twelfth story.

THE WIFE

How you startled me!

THE LOVER

Didn't I? (*He enters and closes the window behind him*) Have you a whiskbroom? (*She gives him one. He dusts himself. Then he opens his arms*) Now,

light of my life! (*She rushes to his embrace*) Ah! Ah! . . . Your husband is gone?

THE WIFE (*shyly*)

I think so.

THE LOVER

You think so?

THE WIFE

I believe he went to Philadelphia.

THE LOVER

You believe?

THE WIFE (*with coyness*)

I had detectives following him. They wired me that he arrived.

THE LOVER

Good. . . . Are we alone?

THE WIFE

There's nobody here but the servants.

THE LOVER

How many?

THE WIFE

About eleven—(*with maidenly reserve*)—but I've bribed them all.

THE LOVER

Good. (*He sits and opens his arms*) Come!

THE WIFE

Oh, but I've never sat on your lap before!

THE LOVER

Think of the time you've wasted. (*She sits on his lap*) Ah! Ah! How I've longed for you!

HE WIFE (*caressing his hair*)
Have you?
HE LOVER
How I've counted the minutes until we should meet!
HE WIFE
Ronald!
HE LOVER
Annabelle!
HE WIFE
Ronald!
HE LOVER
Annabelle!
HE WIFE
Ronald!
HE LOVER
Annabelle! (*They kiss . . .*) Oh, Annabelle, if we had only met sooner!
HE WIFE
Ah, Ronald!
HE LOVER
I shouldn't have given you anything like this!
HE WIFE
No, Ronald.
IE LOVER
I should have given you—poverty!
IE WIFE (*enraptured*)
Poverty!
IE LOVER
Poverty—and understanding!

THE WIFE

Ah, Ronald! Ronald!

[*She rumples his hair fiercely.*

THE LOVER (*rising suddenly, holding her in his arms*)

Sweetheart!

THE WIFE

Why, Ronald, how strong you are!

THE LOVER

Aren't I?

THE WIFE

This is the first time you've lifted me in your arms.

THE LOVER

There always is a first time.

[*He turns toward the rear door.*

THE WIFE (*with alarm*)

Ronald, where are you taking me?

THE LOVER

Just into the next room, Annabelle.

[*He moves toward the door.*

THE WIFE (*with wild terror*)

Stop, Ronald! Oh, oh, stop!

THE LOVER (*indulgently*)

Why should I stop?

THE WIFE

Put me down, Ronald! You must not do that!

THE LOVER (*persuasively*)

Why not?

THE WIFE

Don't take me in there, Ronald! Ronald, you mus
not take me into that room!

THE LOVER

Annabelle, don't be foolish.

THE WIFE

I'm not foolish.

THE LOVER

But you are. (*Resolutely*) Annabelle, you've kissed me.

THE WIFE

Yes, yes, I know.

THE LOVER

You've sat on my lap.

THE WIFE

Yes, yes, I know.

THE LOVER

You love me—and I love you. We should be everything to one another.

THE WIFE

Yes, yes. But don't take me into that room.

THE LOVER (*laughing indulgently*)

Sweetheart, why shouldn't I take you into that room?

THE WIFE (*hiding her face on his shoulder*)

Because—because—that's the dining-room.

CURTAIN

THE UNACCEPTED APOLOGY

CHARACTERS:

He

She

An Intruder

SCENE:

An Apartment.

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES (*as the curtain rises*)

We are in a beautifully furnished West Side apartment. It is midnight—or later. Sh!

[*He bows and retires.*

[*A man and a woman, both in evening dress, face us on a sofa. They are embracing passionately.*

[*There enters a second man. Without a word, he shoots the first man dead.*

[*The lady rises, annoyed.*

THE INTRUDER (*surveying the apartment*)

I say?

THE LADY

What?

THE INTRUDER

Has this room been repapered recently?

THE LADY

Not since last October.

THE INTRUDER

Then this isn't the fourth floor?

THE LADY

This is the third.

THE INTRUDER

Oh! (*He smiles*) I belong a flight higher. Excuse me.

[*Exit.*

CURTAIN

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THE FACTS

CHARACTERS:

The Husband
The Wife

SCENE:

A camp in a Canadian wilderness.

[*It is night. We are in a tent. Lying on a cot, amateurishly bandaged, is a wounded woman. Near her, sitting on a box, is a man.*

THE WIFE

So it's the end!

THE HUSBAND

Don't say that.

THE WIFE

But I know. I know I'm not going to live through the night. (*She pauses and smiles*) You did a good job, my dear.

THE HUSBAND

Don't!

THE WIFE

It's what might have been expected of one of the finest riflemen in the world. Even when you hit the wrong target, you shot straight. You saw something moving through the underbrush. You

thought it was an animal. It was all my fault: I had forgotten to put on my red sweater. You fired. It must have been all of three hundred yards, but you scored a bull's eye.

THE HUSBAND

Don't, darling, don't! (*There is a long pause*) The guide will be back with a doctor soon.

THE WIFE

How soon?

THE HUSBAND

By morning.

THE WIFE

That will be too late. But it's all right, dear. I don't feel any pain. I'm dying, and it isn't a bit disagreeable. I'm just—just fading out. . . . I wonder if all the hundreds of animals you've shot found dying as pleasant as this! (*She takes his hand. He is silent*) Dear, I'm very happy.

THE HUSBAND

Happy?

THE WIFE (*nodding*)

Dying—now—is a lovely solution. It's the best of all solutions. (*She pauses*) I have something to tell you.

THE HUSBAND

Don't tire yourself, darling.

THE WIFE

What does it matter if I tire myself now? I'm going to have a long rest. I'm telling you—I'm telling you because you might find it out some day—and

because I'd rather have it come straight from me. Dear, I haven't been a good wife and a good mother. I—I've been untrue to you. (*She pauses. He is silent*) It happened the first time over a year ago. I shan't tell you his name. It doesn't matter—because there was another man in my life not six weeks later. (*She pauses again; he is still silent*) You see, I wanted admiration. I—I got it. And then, when it came, I didn't have quite enough self-control to call a halt. The moth and the flame—and the moth got singed. . . . I tried to turn over a new leaf, but—it wasn't so easy. I was always afraid—afraid you'd find out—afraid the children would find out. . . . That's why I'm so happy now. They'll grow up, and they'll never suspect me for what I really was. They'll think of their mother as a saint—and you'll never tell them anything to the contrary.

THE HUSBAND

No.

THE WIFE

You promise? (*He nods*) And you forgive me? (*He nods again*) Stupid old dear, you never knew!

THE HUSBAND (*very quietly*)

I knew—(*she gasps*)—from the very beginning.

THE WIFE

And never said a word?

THE HUSBAND

How could I? Like you, I wanted our children to think well of their mother.

THE WIFE (*pressing his hand*)

They will now. That's nice.

THE HUSBAND

That's as it should be. (*He pauses*) Darling, I watched. I knew all; and the thought that there was a solution came to me even before it came to you. (*He pauses again, and lowers his voice*) Darling, that's why I planned this hunting trip. That's why I picked out a place miles away from civilization. That's why I waited my chance, and when the chance came, I took careful aim—and shot you.

CURTAIN

Author's Note:

Miss Laurette Taylor, dramatizing a story told her by Mr. Gerald DuMaurier, was, I believe, the first to write a play in which a deathbed confession was followed, and not preceded, by revelation of the truth. Mr. Jack Bechdolt has made use of the same theme.

In both of these plays a husband cold-bloodedly poisons his wife, and, though the action stops before that point, presumably pays the penalty.

VIGNETTE

CHARACTERS:

He

She

A Pullman Porter

SCENE:

A Compartment in a Pullman Car

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES (*as the curtain rises; melodramatically*)

In every life, ladies and gentlemen, there are great moments—tender moments—unforgettable moments—and there are moments that are all three at once: great, tender, unforgettable. It is one of these that our author is about to depict in his usual sympathetic manner. Indeed, his manner is here so sympathetic that it verges upon the sentimental; but who, ladies and gentlemen, could look upon the scene and the characters of this touching, this poignant, this Barrie-esque little drama, and remain entirely unaffected? While hearts beat warm, and men are men, and women are women, an audience will always feel for persons situated as are these who will presently appear before you!

The scene: mark it well: a compartment in a Pullman car bound for Albany, Utica, Syracuse,

Rochester, Niagara Falls, and points north, west, and southwest. The characters—they come. I am sure you will understand and excuse their nervousness.

[*He bows and retires.*

THE PULLMAN PORTER (*opening the door of the compartment*)

Yassuh! Yassuh! (*He carries in half a dozen satchels, valises, hat-boxes, shoe-boxes, and the like, besides miscellaneous packages*) This way, ma'am. This way, suh! Right in here.

[*There enter She, a beautifully dressed flapper, with an enormous corsage bouquet of rosebuds and lilies-of-the-valley, and He, an immaculate young man, attired in traveling clothes and wearing an elaborate boutonnière.*

THE PORTER

Here yuh are, suh. Six hand-bags, three valises, an' eight packages.

HE (*handing the porter a banknote*)

Correct.

THE PORTER

Thank yuh, suh. (*Glimpsing the denomination of the note*) Thank YUH, suh! (*At the door*) The train leaves in ten minutes, suh. (*Exit*)

SHE

Are we alone?

HE

At last!

SHE

I thought we'd never get away! Never! Never! Never!

HE

Billie?

SHE

Angel?

[*He opens his arms. They embrace tenderly. There is a flash at the window at the rear. They break. She screams.*

HE (*peering out of the window*)

The reporters are out there. One of them took a flashlight picture. (*There is a second flash*) Hang it! There goes another!

[*He pulls down the window-shade.*

SHE

Damn the reporters!

HE (*turning to her gently*)

Billie?

SHE

Angel?

HE

You know I don't like you to swear.

SHE

Forgive me. You do forgive me, don't you, honey boy?

HE

Billie!

[*They embrace tenderly.*

SHE (*presently*)
Angel!

HE
Billie?

SHE
I'm just dying for a drink.

HE
How thoughtless of me! (*He opens one of the suitcases*) I'll have it in a minute.
[*He produces lingerie from the suitcase.*

SHE (*coyly*)
Foolish boy! That isn't the right suitcase!

HE
Sorry. (*He holds up a nightdress made of sheer black chiffon*) I say, aren't you the little old snuggle-pup!

SHE (*slapping him playfully*)
Naughty! Naughty!

HE (*overcome by a sudden attack of emotion, and opening his arms*)
Billie!

SHE
Angel!
[*They embrace tenderly. Presently they break. He holds up the garment with a sigh, and shakes his head expressively.*

SHE
Put it away.

HE
I guess I'd better. (*He repacks it carefully*) There.

SHE

Where in hell is that drink?

HE (*reproachfully*)

Billie!

SHE

I forgot, angel lover. I didn't mean to swear. It just slipped out.

HE (*looking up at her with dog-like eyes*)

Remember, Billie, what day this is! (*He sighs*) This is a great day in our lives.

SHE

I'll tell the world!

HE (*pouring into a collapsible cup*)

Say when . . . (*He continues to pour*) say when . . . (*He continues*) Say when! . . . (*He stops pouring*) Would you rather drink out of the bottle?

SHE (*charmed*)

Angel! How you anticipate my slightest wish! (*She takes the bottle*) Aren't you going to drink with me?

HE

You know my principles.

SHE

Oh, damn your principles!

HE (*reproachfully*)

Billie!

SHE

Today—just today—no principles!

HE (*acquiescing*)
Today only. (*He raises the cup to his lips*) Well, here's to us!
[*He drinks.*

SHE
Over the burning sands!
[*She drinks.*

HE
[*Coughs.*

SHE
What's the matter?

HE (*coughing*)
This—this is brandy!

SHE
I'll say it is! (*She empties the bottle; sits*) Angel, get me a skag.

HE
Where do you keep them?

SHE (*indicating a bag*)
There. And don't tell me you'd rather I wouldn't smoke.

HE
I wouldn't say that today. (*He finds and opens a tin of five hundred cigarettes*) You've bought enough to last the whole journey.

SHE (*taking and lighting a cigarette*)
I hope so. I put a tin of 'em in every bag, so that I'd be all right if one of 'em got lost.

HE (*with admiration*)
How do you think of everything!

SHE

Don't I? (*She makes room for him*) Come. Sit here, angel. Can you realize that the train will be on its way in less than five minutes?

HE

It's hard to believe.

SHE

Gosh, I thought today would never come!

HE

Were you anxious?

SHE

I was counting the hours!

HE

Well, the time's come now. Are you glad?

SHE (*coyly*)

I don't know yet. But I think it's going to work out all right.

HE (*impassioned*)

Billie!

SHE

Paws down! Paws down, I said! . . . There! That's a good dog! (*She relaxes*) What a day it's been! (*He nods soberly*) Signing things! Oh, so many of them! I thought I'd never get through! Rushing here! Rushing there! *My* mother and father! *Your* mother and father! *My* friends! *Your* friends! The crowds! The photographers! The reporters! Oh, the reporters!

HE

They were the worst.

SHE

I'll tell the world! But it's over now! Over! Over! Over!

HE

We'll read about ourselves in the paper tomorrow.

SHE

That'll be fun. Won't it?

HE

Don't you feel thrilled—starting a new life?

SHE

Thrilled? Oh, thrilled isn't the word for it. (*She smiles reminiscently*) Your father doesn't approve.

HE

No.

SHE

He wouldn't. He's too respectable. But my old man's strong for it.

HE

He would be.

SHE

Now, don't go slamming him! You and he never hit it off well anyhow.

HE (*taking her in his arms*)

But everything's all right now, isn't it?

SHE

All right? It couldn't be righter!

[*They embrace—tenderly.*

[*There is a knock at the door.*

SHE

Come in.

THE PORTER (*entering*)

Ah thought yuh'd like me to tell yuh, ma'am, the train stahts in two minutes.

SHE

It can't start too soon to suit me. (*She rises with a sudden gasp*) Oh!

HE

What is it, Billie?

SHE

I've forgotten something!

THE PORTER

Forgotten something, ma'am?

SHE

I can't think what it is, but I know I've forgotten something!

HE (*going through the luggage hurriedly*)

Hat-boxes. . . .

SHE

No, it isn't hat-boxes.

HE

Shoe-boxes. . . .

SHE

No, it isn't shoe-boxes. (*She joins the search*) The phonograph is here—and the records are here—and my beauty clay is here—and this is full of liquor—and here is candy—and cigarettes—and more cigarettes—and——

THE PORTER (*interrupting*)

They's six hand-bags, three valises, an' eight packages.

SHE (*becoming more and more excited*)

They're all here! (*The Porter runs out suddenly*) But I've forgotten something! I know it! I've forgotten something!

HE

You've got plenty of fresh handkerchiefs?

SHE

It isn't that! No, it isn't that! It's something more important, and I know I've forgotten it! (*She turns on him*) Think, angel! Think! What have I forgotten? What have I forgotten?

HE (*methodically*)

Writing paper? (*She shakes her head*) Stamps? . . . Sealing-wax? . . . Money? . . . Your tooth-brush? . . . Your tooth-paste? . . . Your eye-brow-pencil? . . . Your sponge? . . . (*Triumphantly*) I've got it: needles for the phonograph?

SHE

No! No! No!

THE PORTER (*re-entering with an animated bundle*)

Here yuh are, ma'am! Here you are!

SHE (*with a scream of delight as she recognizes the bundle*)

The baby! That's it! I forgot the baby! (*She takes the baby*) Angel, I nearly went off without Junior!

THE VOICE OF THE CONDUCTOR

All aboard! All aboard!

HE

Good by, Billie!

SHE

Good by, angel! (*They kiss quickly*) Aren't you going to say good by to your son?

HE (*shaking the infant's hand*)

Good by.

SHE

By by!

HE

Be sure to write me.

SHE

I will. (*He runs off. She raises the window-shade, and makes the baby wave its hand*) By by, daddy! Daddy, by by! By by, everybody! By by! By by! (*She turns back with a sigh, pulling down the shade*) Thank God that's over!

THE PORTER (*grinning*)

Yas'm.

SHE (*turning on him*)

Porter, do you go through with this car?

THE PORTER

Yas'm, Ah sure goes through the whole way.

SHE (*tearing a banknote in half*)

You get this now. You get the other half if you've taken good care of me when I get off at Reno. Do you understand?

THE PORTER

Yas'm, thank yuh, ma'am. Ah sure understands: the other half when yuh gits off at Reno. (*He pauses at the door*) Ah've taken care of lots of

ladies gittin' off at Reno befo', an' Ah always gives 'em mah best distention.

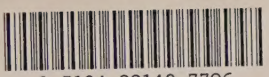
SHE (*shortly*)

Fine. Now beat it. (*She sits again. She opens a satchel. She produces a nursing-bottle. She gives it to the baby. Then, with her cigarette glued to her lip, she begins to sing softly:*)

See saw,
Margery Daw,
Jackie shall have a new master. . . .

CURTAIN

THE END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